THE WORLD'S LEADING MYSTERY MAGAZINE

ELLERY QUEEN'S

Mystery Magazine

MAY 50¢ 1965

10 NEW STORIES

The Spy Who Did Nothing
EDWARD D. HOCH

The Hate Murders
PATRICIA HIGHSMITH

Professional Riposte
MICHAEL GILBERT

Third Sacred Well of the Temple
AVRAM DAVIDSON

SPECIAL—don't miss a "new" POE-DUPIN story by MICHAEL HARRISON

2 DETECTIVE NOVELETS

DOROTHY L. SAYERS
Lord Peter Wimsey in *The Power of Darkness*

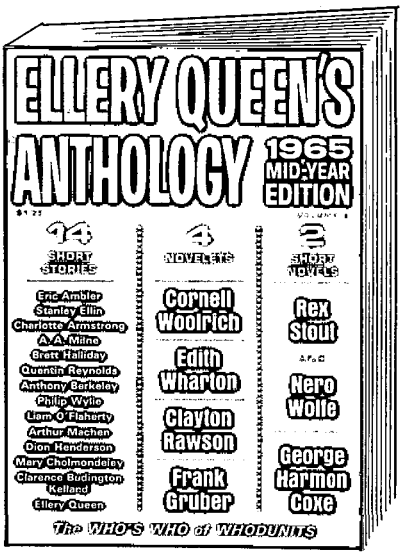
JOHN & WARD HAWKINS
The Killer Is Loose

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SAVE 20%

Send for your copy of ELLERY QUEEN'S Mid-Year 1965 ANTHOLOGY and pay only $1!

(Newsstand price: $1.25)



ELLERY QUEEN'S ANTHOLOGY E565
505 Park Avenue • New York, N.Y. 10022

Please send me_____copies of ELLERY QUEEN'S MID-YEAR 1965 ANTHOLOGY NO. 9. I am enclosing $1 for each copy ($1.25 outside U.S.A.).

Name_____
(Please Print)

Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip Code_____

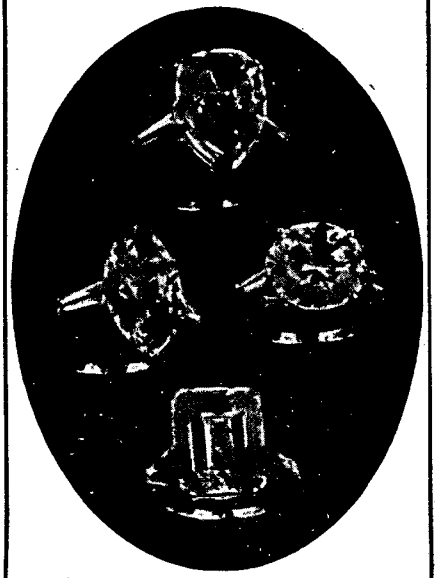
Each story in this 324-page edition will baffle and intrigue you. Don't miss sending for your copy of these ingenious tales. For suspense, excitement and spine-tingling mysteries, mail the coupon today.

Turn to page 98 for extra coupon

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Diamond of Your Dreams

at a price you can afford



You can now buy diamond jewelry by mail direct from one of America's well known diamond cutters. Save from 1/4 to 1/2 and wear the diamonds for 10 days without payment or obligation. This new way of buying diamonds is the talk of the country.

Send for **FREE 72-PAGE CATALOG.**

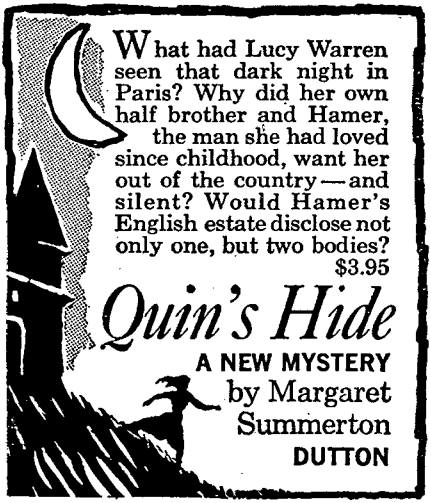
Over 5,000 styles $100 to $100,000

EMPIRE DIAMOND CORP., DEPT. 91
Empire State Bldg., New York 1, N. Y.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

.....



What had Lucy Warren seen that dark night in Paris? Why did her own half brother and Hamer, the man she had loved since childhood, want her out of the country—and silent? Would Hamer's English estate disclose not only one, but two bodies?

$3.95

Quin's Hide

A NEW MYSTERY by Margaret Summerton

DUTTON

Is the Man of the House Interested in Electronics?

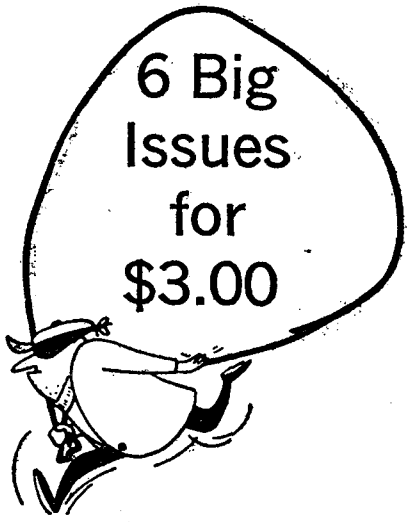
Surprise him with the latest issue of ELEMENTARY ELECTRONICS!

He will love the construction projects and the ideas for maintaining and improving equipment of many kinds. ELEMENTARY ELECTRONICS also serves as a useful reference for around-the-house repairs.

Don't wait for a special occasion. Give ELEMENTARY ELECTRONICS today! Available at all newsstands. 75¢.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Loaded With Mystery Thrills



Each issue is packed with stories of pure detection, probing studies of crime, mysteries filled with suspense, surprise—even the supernatural.

Bigger than ever before—better than ever before: EQMM is the best buy ever!

ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE
505 Park Avenue / New York, N.Y. 10022

Please enter my special subscription to ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE—6 big issues for $6.00.

☐ $3 enclosed ☐ Bill me later

Name_____
(Please print)

Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip Code_____

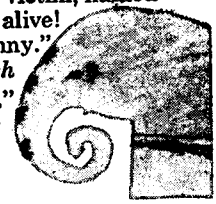
THE PERFECT MURDER

H.R.F. KEATING

The headlines in India were all wrong... not only was it not a *perfect* murder, it wasn't a murder at all, for the victim, named Perfect, was still alive!

"Marvelously funny."
—*Punch*

"Highly original."
—*Sunday Times*



$3.95 **DUTTON**

LOOKING FOR EXTRA INCOME?

The May-June issue of INCOME OPPORTUNITIES reveals dozens of ways your spare time can turn into income-producing time. Start cashing in on the many opportunities available to you *today!*

INCOME OPPORTUNITIES contains complete information on proven ways to a profitable future with full-time or part-time jobs. Buy your copy of the May-June issue—on sale now at newsstands everywhere.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The World's Leading Mystery Magazine

ELLERY QUEEN'S
Mystery Magazine

DETECTIVES, CRIMINALS... and SPIES

PROFESSIONAL RIPOSTE	Michael Gilbert	6
THE HATE MURDERS	Patricia Highsmith	11
THE VANISHED TREASURE	Michael Harrison	23
A CALL FROM THE DEVIL	Don Knowlton	37
HOSS THIEF	Richard O. Lewis	67
THE THIRD SACRED WELL OF THE TEMPLE	Avram Davidson	72
THE EMPEROR'S DICE	Ellery Queen	86
THE SPY WHO DID NOTHING	Edward D. Hoch	120
THE VIRGIN CAVE	Bryce Walton	127

DETECTIVE NOVELETS

THE POWER OF DARKNESS	Dorothy L. Sayers	46
THE KILLER IS LOOSE	John & Ward Hawkins	139

SPECIAL FEATURE

GUMSHOE GLOSSARY	A. C. Lamprey	115

EQMM "FIRST STORIES"

THE NIGHT FRIENDS	Julian F. Thompson	100
A ROW OF TULIPS	Barbara P. Scharmer	110

HARDCOVERS AND PAPERBACKS OF THE MONTH 119

BEST MYSTERIES OF THE MONTH Anthony Boucher 99

PUBLISHER: *B. G. Davis* **EDITOR:** *Ellery Queen*

Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, Vol. 45, No. 5, Whole No. 258 MAY, 1965. Published monthly by Davis Publications, Inc., at 50c a copy. Annual subscription $6.00 in U.S.A. and possessions and Canada; $7.00 in the Pan American Union; $7.00 in all other countries. Editorial and General Offices, 505 Park Ave., New York, N. Y. 10022. Change of address notices, undeliverable copies, orders for subscriptions and other mail items are to be sent to 505 Park Ave., New York, N. Y. 10022. Second-Class postage paid at Concord, N. H. *© 1965 by Davis Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. Protection secured under the Universal Copyright Convention and the Pan American Copyright Convention. Printed in U.S.A. Submissions must be accompanied by stamped self-addressed envelope; the Publisher assumes no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts.*

JOEL DAVIS, *Assistan Publisher* CLAYTON RAWSON, *Managing Editor*
MELVIN FLAMM, *Business Manager* CONSTANCE DI RIENZO, *Executive Editorial Secretary*
LEONARD F. PINTO, *Production Director* FRANK TAGGART, *Art Director*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a new story by

EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR:	**MICHAEL GILBERT**
TITLE:	***Professional Riposte***
TYPE:	Detective Story
DETECTIVE:	Dr. Arnold Lethbury
LOCALE:	Europe
TIME:	The Present
COMMENTS:	*Dr. Lethbury had been County Pathologist for twenty years. He had often been puzzled professionally. Now, on his last case before retirement, he was baffled . . .*

IN THE LONG YEARS OF HIS RETIREment, Doctor Arnold Lethbury sometimes felt an overmastering desire to discuss the facts of his last case. But he refrained. It involved three deaths, two different and equally undetectable methods of committing murder, and an accusation against a man still living. It also involved one of his own rare indiscretions . . .

At the time of his retirement Dr. Lethbury had been County Pathologist for twenty years. Forensic medicine is not a subject which can be learned out of books. "It's partly experience, partly instinct," he explained to his friend and former pupil, Dr. Richard Tanner. "After you've cut up a thousand bodies you get a sort of feeling about death. You get so that you can tell what *ought* to have killed someone. An autopsy is unnecessary. You do it to please the coroner."

"You do it to earn your fee," said Dr. Tanner. He had known Dr. Lethbury long enough to pull his leg. "Have you ever been baffled?"

"Until very recently I should have said that I'd often been puzzled, but never baffled."

"And now you *are* baffled?"

"Listen to this," said Dr. Leth-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bury. "Three days ago Sergeant Hefflin collapsed and died five minutes after coming on duty at the Docks Police Station. The snap diagnosis made by the Police Surgeon was occlusion of the coronary artery—in other words, a thrombosis. Now—what do you visualize?"

Dr. Tanner smiled and said, "I see a red-faced, burly man, overweight from too much desk work."

Doctor Lethbury said, "Sergeant Hefflin was twenty-four. He had just been promoted to desk work from the beat. He was a first-class football player, he rarely smoked, and he never touched alcohol."

"Then the Police Surgeon must have been daft."

"I have just concluded the autopsy, and shall have to report that there was every sign of occlusion of the coronary artery—and no other discernible cause of death."

Dr Tanner gasped. "Thrombosis—in a youngster of twenty-four?"

"It's a very odd case," agreed Dr. Lethbury, "and I've still got some inquiries to make. Call round for coffee this evening and I may be able to tell you more."

"I'd like to do that," said Dr. Tanner. "My wife will be out—some committee or other."

"Anthea's a busy woman."

"She's so damned busy I scarcely see her. Meetings and committees nearly every evening, and her garden every week-end."

"She certainly keeps that garden of yours in apple-pie order."

"I'd hate to be a slug in one of *her* roses," said Dr. Tanner, and then blushed, as if he had made an indecent remark . . .

A man who spends a large part of his work day following the tiny footprints of death through the corridors of the human body must develop a talent for observation. Discretion was Doctor Lethbury's watchword. But he could not help reflecting on the sad trick which fate had played on his friend and former pupil. Dick Tanner was rich, talented, and over forty when he met Anthea, who was strikingly beautiful, and who married him for all the wrong reasons—because of the prestige which being the wife of a successful doctor would bring, because she was younger than Dick, and because she would inherit his wealth.

Dr. Lethbury had thought it all a great pity, but he had not worried about it until two things happened. First, Dick Tanner's young partner, David Maxwell, appeared on the scene; and second, Anthea developed anemia. It was only a mild form of anemia, but it was a threat. Dr. Lethbury, meeting her on social occasions and talking polite trivialities, had read a disturbing message in her flat green eyes. It was the look of someone who saw a rich prize ahead of her—and saw time running out before she could grasp it . . .

Reflecting on the perversity of life and the diversity of death, Dr.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Lethbury made his way to the Docks Police Station. He had an appointment with Inspector Frost.

"To be honest with you," said Frost, "I wouldn't have called Hefflin popular. A good footballer like him should've been popular. But he was ambitious—not too much harm in that. And he was a bit mean."

"Mean?"

"When he broke training after a big match, he'd cadge a cigarette to save buying himself a packet."

"I see," said Dr. Lethbury. That seemed a fairly harmless failing. "Where did you put his things?"

"They're in a room at the back. Would you like to look at them?"

The total of the late Sergeant Hefflin's worldly goods hardly filled one corner. Two big suitcases, a kit bag, a squash racquet. A brief case full of personal papers. A cardboard box full of oddments. On top of the box, the first thing that caught Dr. Lethbury's eye was a packet of cigarettes. The torn cellophane showed that it had been opened.

"So he did buy his own sometimes. Expensive taste too. Handmade Turkish."

"I've never known him to smoke anything but Virginians," said the Inspector. "Maybe they were a present from some girl."

Dr. Lethbury opened the packet. There were eighteen cigarettes in it. Now a very faint suspicion was niggling at the back of his mind.

"You say he only smoked occasionally?"

"That's right. After a big match. One to celebrate, as you might say. Why?"

"The only thing I noticed when doing the autopsy—the only thing out of the way, that is—was the smell of nicotine. You'd have expected it with a heavy smoker, but not with a chap like Hefflin. Do you mind if I borrow these?"

"I shouldn't think anyone'd object if you kept them," said the Inspector.

When Doctor Tanner called that evening he found his host emerging from his private laboratory.

"You've timed it well," said Dr. Lethbury. "The coffee's almost ready."

"Are you working on something?"

"I've just finished. Sit down."

"What have you been doing?"

Dr. Lethbury said, "As a matter of fact, I've been analyzing a packet of cigarettes."

"And what did you find in them?"

"Nicotine."

Dr. Tanner laughed, and said, "You surprise me."

"It was the quantity of nicotine that was surprising," said Dr. Lethbury. "Between forty and fifty times as much as there should have been. I wonder if you recognize this packet?"

Dr. Tanner turned his head. There was a note in Dr. Lethbury's voice that he found disturbing.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Certainly," he said. "They're Giaour Turks. Rather an acquired taste. I thought I was the only person in these parts who smoked them. *What* was that you said—?"

"I said that there was nearly fifty times as much nicotine in them as there should have been. I'm not sure how it got there but my guess would be that someone took a hypodermic syringe and injected a drop or two of pure nicotine into each cigarette."

There was a longish silence while the two doctors looked at each other, and the percolator bubbled. Then Doctor Tanner said unexpectedly, "Hefflin—Hefflin! When you said it, I knew I'd heard the name before. He was the policeman who picked us up when we had our crash. Just before Christmas. I heard his name when he gave evidence at the Inquest."

There was another pause. Dr. Lethbury could see his colleague's mind sprinting along the same track that he himself had followed so laboriously.

Dr. Lethbury said, "You're talking about your father-in-law's death, aren't you? What exactly did happen?"

"It was just before Christmas. I was driving the old boy down to the station. He wanted a cigarette. I was smoking the last one in my own case, but there was a new packet of Giaour Turks in the glove compartment. I told him to help himself. A minute later he grabbed at his chest with both hands, keeled over, and fell on top of me. I lost control, hit a lamppost, and woke up in the General Infirmary."

"Your father-in-law's death was brought in as thrombosis?"

"Certainly. No one had the least doubt about it."

"And so, in a sense, it was," said Dr. Lethbury. "A large overdose of nicotine, taken in that way, would immediately occlude the coronary artery."

"There's something I can't quite understand," said Dr. Tanner. "Assume that Sergeant Hefflin picked up the packet of cigarettes after the crash, and pocketed it. Why didn't *he* run into trouble sooner?"

Dr. Lethbury explained about Hefflin's training methods. He took his time over it. It helped to fill a silence which was becoming awkward. As he spoke, Doctor Lethbury was seeing a woman with flat green eyes. He saw her going to the garden shed where she kept her nicotine sprays—she was an inveterate gardener. He saw her going into her husband's surgery, where the hypodermics were kept—softly, softly—and he saw her tearing the cellophane on a new packet of Turkish cigarettes . . .

Dr. Tanner got abruptly to his feet, and hurried out.

Dr. Lethbury gave a cocktail party to celebrate his retirement. Dick Tanner and Anthea excused themselves from attending—indeed,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dr. Lethbury had seen little of either of them since the chat over the coffee cups.

But young Dr. David Maxwell was there, and he was full of his own troubles—too many patients, too little spare time, too little money.

"It's all right for you," he said. "You were in the racket in the old days when a doctor could put a bit of money by. What's a G.P. nowadays? A slot machine for prescriptions. I share a surgery and a dispenser with three other doctors—"

The handsome face was petulant. Dr. Lethbury was only half listening—when something the young man said made him prick up his ears.

"I can't even look after my own drugs. Why, the other day I lost a whole bottle of Nor-adrenalin. God knows what happened to it. The dispenser probably broke it—but of course she won't admit it. . . ."

Dr. Lethbury was thinking of that conversation as he lay on the beach at Petalidion, listening to the soft slapping of the Ionian Sea on white sands.

Nor-adrenalin. A neat answer! A professional riposte!

He extracted from his wallet, and reread, the news clipping which a friend in England had sent to him.

It was headlined: *Tragedy Strikes Again*, and it recorded the unexpected death of Anthea Tanner, wife of Dr. Richard Tanner, from a contraction of the heart, tentatively diagnosed as thrombosis. The coincidence, which had caught the attention of an alert journalist, was that Anthea Tanner's father had succumbed to a similar attack only six months before.

Dr. Lethbury stretched out a bare foot and scratched a line in the sand. His thought assumed, momentarily, a logical pattern.

Anthea was having injections for her anemia. The substitution of a single shot of Nor-adrenalin would have done the trick. And if anyone had been suspicious—which they weren't—the adrenalin would have been traced back to young Dr. Maxwell, not to her husband.

"If that's the way Dick did it," said Dr. Lethbury, "it was the safest murder ever committed."

A long shadow slid down the beach as the sun touched the top of Mount Likodimos.

Dr. Lethbury wondered if it could ever be right to approve of a husband murdering his wife. Anthea had attempted to kill Dick. She had succeeded in killing her own father and a policeman. If Dr. Lethbury hadn't shoved his oar in, she would surely have tried again, and would no doubt, ultimately, have succeeded. She would then have used Dick's money to ensnare young Dr. Maxwell.

And when she had got tired of *him*—?

Dr. Lethbury rolled over. It was getting cold. He wondered who had done the autopsy on Anthea. No matter. He was retired. It had nothing to do with him—not any more.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED.

a new story by

PATRICIA HIGHSMITH

EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR:	PATRICIA HIGHSMITH
TITLE:	*The Hate Murders*
TYPE:	Crime Story
LOCALE:	Copperville, New Jersey
TIME:	The Present
COMMENTS:	*The strangely moving story of Aaron Woodbridge, post office clerk—a character study in depth about a man who lived alone and despised people . . .*

AARON WOODBRIDGE GOT HOME from work at 6:10. He had stayed a few minutes longer than usual, to help sort the mail after the post office closed at 5:00—just to give the impression that today was like any other day, that he was not at all uneasy or anxious to get out of the place, even though Roger O'Hare's body lay crumpled and bloody in the back storage closet where they kept spare mailbags. Who'd find it, Aaron wondered. Mac, the postmaster? Bobbie, Mac's son? One of the letter carriers? He didn't really care who found the body.

Aaron was a middle-sized man with a slight paunch, 55 years old, with straight black hair that was graying at the temples. He wore dark-rimmed, thick-lensed glasses that gave a blurry, evasive look to his eyes. Actually, Aaron's eyes were evasive. More and more he disliked looking straight at people. He was restless and nervous, and he hated his job at the post office, but he was determined to stick it out—to stick it out in some post office, if not in this one—until he got his pension, his just reward for a lifetime's work.

Aaron went to the kitchen and washed his hands thoroughly with the yellow soap he used for cleaning dishes. Then he sat down at the table that served him both as eating table and desk, and opened the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gray ledger in which he kept his diary. He wrote:

September 28

Today I killed Roger O'Hare. I did it shortly after noon, just as I planned. The others had gone out to lunch and I was supposed to go out at 12:00 while Roger kept the post office open. Roger was to go out at 1:00. So about 12:20 Roger looked over his shoulder and said with his customary sneer, "'Aren't you going out to lunch?"

He was standing at the counter going through the money-order book. I picked up the heavy stapler and hit him in the back of the head. I probably fractured his skull with the first blow, but I hit him several times to make sure. Then I dragged him to the storage closet in back and dumped him on the mailbags.

I didn't go home to lunch as usual, but I went out before 1:00 and came back around 1:00 when the others did. When Mac asked where Roger was (this was around 2:00), I said, "I haven't seen him since I went out a little after 12:00."

Mac looked surprised, but he didn't say anything. I suppose Mac will call Roger's house tomorrow morning when he doesn't show up or they'll start looking for him tonight when he doesn't come home. But it might be a couple of days before they find the body, since that closet in the rear is not opened very often.

Roger O'Hare: Number One.

Aaron laid his pen in the groove of the ledger, rubbed his palms gently together, and looked at what he had written. The handwriting was small and neat, the ink black. Mac the postmaster was next. Wipe out that self-satisfied expression, stop that scornful headshaking, the eyes that slurred away, as if whatever or whoever Mac looked at was the lowest of the low, not even worthy of a word of contempt from the great Edward MacAllister, Postmaster.

Yet whatever bungling Bobbie did, that was okay, because Bobbie was his son. "Dad, where's the eight-cent airmails? . . . Dad, mind if I shove off? I got an early date with Helen."

Bobbie might be Number Three. Watch out, Bobbie.

Aaron went to the sink again, stooped, and from behind a blue-and-white checked curtain below the sink, took a bottle of rye that stood among the detergents and other cleaning materials. He poured himself a generous drink, dropped in some ice cubes, and sipped it with appreciation. Then he opened a can of corned beef hash, and put it into a frying pan with an egg in the center of it.

It crossed his mind, very faintly, that he might have treated himself to something special tonight, like a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

steak, or at least lamb chops or pork chops; but the thought did not last long, and brought him no discontent with his simple meal. His wife used to make fun of him for liking corned beef hash so much, and said he had the taste of a convict. His memory was confused for a few seconds between Vera smiling when she had said that and Vera sneering when she said it. Well, maybe she'd done both at different times.

She had ended up by walking out on him, and she'd certainly been sneering then. Good riddance, Aaron thought. He hadn't gone to rack and ruin, he hadn't lost his health, or his job, or anything else Vera had predicted. He'd quit the job in the post office in East Orange and moved to Copperville, New Jersey, where he'd had no difficulty at all in getting the same kind of job at the Copperville Post Office.

"The hell with her," Aaron murmured, and pulled a folded newspaper on the table toward him. His eyes moved over the print, but he did not read. He ate at a steady rate, neither fast nor slow. He got up for a second helping, which finished the hash.

The hell with his children, too, Aaron was thinking. Billy was 24 now—no, 27—and Edith was 23 and already had three kids by that lowlifer she'd married. Yes, there'd been a time when Aaron had had great ambitions for his children, especially when Billy had gone through college and become a Certified Public Accountant; but Edith had fallen in love in her sophomore year and got married, and to a numbskull who was not a college man and who hadn't any money. Aaron had flown into a rage and tried to get the marriage annulled, but by that time Edith was already pregnant, so an annulment was out of the question.

Aaron had fumed—hadn't he reason to, and wasn't he proved right now, with the two of them and their three kids living in some slum in Philadelphia? Billy had defended his sister, and so had Vera. To Aaron—it had been as if his whole world had suddenly lost its mind, reversed the correct order of things. He had stood alone in his defense of sanity, education, the good life, and his own family—all of them—had turned against him, betrayed him and everything he had struggled for since the children had been born and before.

Aaron had got so angry that he had wrecked the house. He had torn pictures off the walls and stamped on them, pulled down the curtains, and thrown every dish in the house on the floor. Then Vera had burst into tears and said she was leaving him, and she had. And he'd let her.

"Let her," Aaron murmured to himself as he sipped his instant coffee. "Let her!" Let her leave him, with all her talk about psychiatrists for him, or a talk with the pastor—"Tschuh," Aaron said with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

contempt. His blood boiled for an instant, then subsided.

He was better off now than he'd ever been in his life. There was a lot to be said for independence. He was saving more money, too, more than he'd ever been able to save since he got married. Last year he had toyed with the idea of taking a cruise to the West Indies in the summer, but he had postponed it, and postponed it this year, too. Well, one summer it would be Europe instead, and that was more interesting than the West Indies, which were simply closer and cheaper.

Yes, his life was fine now, except for the awful bunch of people he had to work with. *They* made him dislike his work, and dislike all the gadgets and rubber stamps and weighing machines and every other mechanical device in the place. He'd been in Copperville three years now. There were times when it didn't seem that long, and times when it seemed much longer. Tonight it didn't seem that long.

Roger O'Hare had a boy in college and another in high school. Plus a wife. Aaron shrugged. It was no time for pity.

He washed up the dishes, put a couple of shirts and a pair of pajamas in a washtub to soak, and went to bed early. Aaron like to sleep. He slept ten hours every night.

The next morning was bright and sunny, with the temperature a perfect 62, as Aaron saw by the therometer beside his front door. Aaron's house was set behind the larger house of his landlord, at the end and to one side of the driveway which led to a garage where his landlord kept his car, a pale blue Buick. There was a thin lawn between Aaron's house and the landlord's house, and Aaron's feet had worn a faint path from his door diagonally across the lawn to the nearer of the two barren streaks made by the car's wheels in the driveway. Aaron had a five-block walk to the post office, through streets of two-story houses with elm and maple trees growing along the sidewalk.

Mac was already in the post office. Mac was always the first to arrive, a few minutes before 8:00.

"Morning, Aaron," Mac said, not deigning to look up at him.

"Morning," Aaron replied. He hung his jacket on a hook on the back wall.

Mac was slowly putting away sheets of stamps in the broad flat drawers under the counter. He always took a long while putting away stamp sheets, holding them up first and scrutinizing them, especially if they were new stamps. But he apparently enjoyed just staring at the perforations in ordinary stamps, like the four-cent Lincolns and the five-cent Washingtons. The Government should know, Aaron thought, just how much time their postmaster, the senior employee at the Copperville, New Jersey, Post

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Office, wasted in doing a dozen little jobs that any ordinary office boy could do.

On a large flat desk behind Mac stood a card that said TENSION, so printed that one's eyes wavered and began to hurt when one looked at it. This small torture was achieved by bands of gray printed alternately above and below the bold black letters, causing a fuzziness in the letters' appearance. Aaron turned the card so that he would not see it while sorting the morning mail.

The office was too hot, already too hot and overheated, but Aaron was afraid this morning to go to the stove and turn it down. It was a large kerosene stove that stood slightly out from the wall, with a pipe that went up toward the ceiling and then turned at a right angle to go out of the building. Mac and the others, Aaron had noticed, were proud of the stove because they thought it was a homey, old-fashioned touch, rather a comic piece in a modern post office that had music by Muzak.

Everybody coming into the post office and waiting at the counter could see the stove and probably feel its heat, too. Today, for instance, there was no need in Aaron's opinion of any fire, yet Mac had started it as usual, as soon as he opened the post office. Mac liked it hot and he liked to work in shirtsleeves, so the rest had to sweat it out all day.

Aaron watched Mac slide a drawer shut, then walk over to the Muzak box and turn it on. The thing began to play, from the middle of the song, *On the Sunny Side of the Street.*

He waits till I get here to turn it on, Aaron thought, just because he knows I don't like it.

"Aaron—there's mail to be sorted, you know." Mac nodded toward the bundles of letters tied together on the desk where Aaron had changed the position of the TENSION sign.

"I'm getting at it," Aaron said, but not very briskly. He took the first bundle and untied it. There were, Aaron could see at a glance, about 800 letters to be sorted for the carriers who took off on their rounds between 9:00 and 9:30.

He began dropping letters into different piles on the broad desk, according to the zones which Aaron knew from the street names. Copperville was too small to have postal zone numbers. *Plop, plop, plop.* Some letters, destined for the private boxes at the front of the post office, in the foyer, he put into certain cubbyholes above the desk, which were marked by groups of numbers. Bills, junk mail, junk mail, bills, bulb catalogues, mail-order catalogues, junk, junk, junk.

Roger O'Hare came in. Aaron barely glanced at him, then bent over his work again, frowning. He heard Mac and Roger exchange "Good morning."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Feeling any better?" Mac asked Roger.

"Oh, yeah, thanks. Little bicarb did the trick, plus a nap," Roger said.

Mac was leaning on the counter on one elbow, doing nothing. "What was it? Too much of pie a la mode or something?" Mac chuckled.

"No, I had beef stew," Roger said. "Ordinary beef stew and . . ."

Aaron was bored and wished he could stop listening. For a moment he did stop listening, but then he heard the music—a straining baritone singing *This Almost Was Mine,* with a lot of violins playing the tune.

Aaron remembered yesterday when Roger came back from lunch at 2:00. He remembered Roger saying to Mac with a pained expression, "Gosh, I'm all doubled up with something I ate. I think I'd better take the afternoon off." Aaron didn't want to remember it. He concentrated on the names, the box numbers on the envelopes he was sorting. Mrs. Lily Foster, Lily Foster, Lily Foster. A divorcee. She had a hat shop in town, and she got more mail than anybody else.

"Well, Aaron," Roger said as he came back from hanging up his jacket, "how about oiling the monster this morning, eh?" He jerked his head in the direction of the four-foot high, black machine some six feet away from him in the middle of a clear space on the floor.

Aaron managed a smile at Roger's feeble quip, and also gave him a nod. Be more polite than he is, Aaron told himself, because you're better than he is. But he did not glance at the monstrous machine. He hated it.

He once knew what the machine was for, but somehow he had obliterated that knowledge from his mind. He simply didn't know what it was for now, he honestly didn't. It looked like a compressed guillotine—as if some giant hand had pressed down on a guillotine and mashed it almost beyond recognition. Yes, but what was it? A weighing device? A machine to press letters from a three-foot-cube into a ten-inch-cube? A machine for crushing people's hands? Feet? Heads? I don't want to have anything to do with that! Aaron could still hear his own voice shouting at Mac—a month ago? six months ago?—when Mac had asked him to do something on it.

Aaron's mind went blank again, and he smiled with satisfaction. No, he didn't know what the black machine did, and he didn't care to know and he never would know. They couldn't fire him for not knowing, either. They couldn't fire him at all. He was a Civil Servant who had passed his examinations.

But that music all day long was driving him crazy, and he might just up and quit. Music to die by, Aaron often thought. He remembered going up in an elevator some-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

where in New York to some appointment he had dreaded—a dentist? a doctor?—and the same kind of sickmaking music had been coming from the ceiling of the elevator, dulcet strains of violins, calculated to soothe, maybe, but which hadn't soothed, any more than it would have soothed the mind of a man walking to an execution chamber . . . music that any fool knew was being played to smooth over something, or to conceal something so horrible that the human mind could not face it . . .

The letter carriers were coming in. Aaron nodded and grunted in reply to their "Morning, Aaron" or just "Morning." Bobbie came over to help him with the sorting. By then it was 9:15. Bobbie was quick. Aaron made himself work more quickly—not that he wanted to, but because he wouldn't be outdone by the likes of Bobbie MacAllister. Bobbie was chubby and still had pimples like an adolescent. He'd be heavy to drag anywhere, Aaron thought.

But he began to plan the extinction of Bobbie that afternoon. This so absorbed him that for a few minutes that afternoon he simply stood at the counter doing nothing, even though several people were waiting with packages to be weighed, and with letters for which they had to buy stamps.

Roger came up to Aaron and said, "Snap out of it, Aaron. People're waiting in *line*!"

Aaron looked at him and thought, *You're dead, Roger. You don't bother me. You're dead, and you don't even know it.* After that, Aaron smiled and went to work quite cheerfully.

Every evening—mostly in his diary because he thought better on paper—Aaron planned the murder of Bobbie MacAllister. Midway in his plans, Bobbie's father Mac seemed a more appropriate victim for his scheme, or rather his scheme seemed more appropriate for Mac. It involved a knife. Mac was thinner than Bobbie. It wouldn't take such a deep thrust.

Aaron took his carving knife to work one morning and stabbed Mac just after 5 P.M., when the two of them were the only ones left in the post office. He stabbed Mac just as Mac was lifting an arm to get his jacket down from a hook. Mac had time only to turn around with a bewildered expression on his face, and then he slowly slumped to the floor. Aaron left him there; he simply stepped over his body and walked out.

He described this in detail in his diary. He filled a whole page with closely written words.

The next day he did not speak to Roger or to Mac. They were both dead. Of course he had to nod to them once or twice, not in greeting, but just by way of replying to something they said or asked him; but that wasn't the same as communi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cating with them, actually speaking to them.

Ten days went by, and the strange looks that Mac and Roger and Bobbie and even some of the letter carriers were giving Aaron did not bother him at all. They couldn't do anything to a man for not speaking, could they? He wrote in his diary:

> It is strange, the walking dead in the post office. It is strange to think I'll soon be the only one alive in the whole post office. I'll walk out one day and leave it empty and lock the door on it myself—after I turn off that damned music. I'll be the sole survivor. Bobbie is the next to go, and then the carriers—maybe Vincent first, because I am tired of the smell of his chewing gum and tired of his hand slapping me on the shoulder every morning if I'm near enough to him.

Aaron wrote in his diary every evening, and he usually wrote at least half a page every noon when he came home for lunch.

Finally Aaron decided to kill Bobbie with a hammer. The first blow would merely knock him out, which was essential considering the size and strength of Bobbie, but the blows after that would finish him. Aaron sawed off five inches of the wooden handle of his hammer, so that he could carry it unseen in the pocket of his overcoat.

It was on November 10th, a Friday, that he first took the hammer to work with him. He was going to follow Bobbie when Bobbie left the post office, which Aaron knew would be slightly before 5:00, since Bobbie always had an early date with Helen on Fridays.

Bobbie kept glancing at Aaron all that day. Bobbie's heavy black brows looked puzzled. Every time Aaron noticed Bobbie, he found Bobbie looking at him, or his own glance seemed to attract Bobbie's eyes.

So Aaron decided that it wasn't the right day for it after all. By 5:00 Bobbie had not yet left the post office, and Aaron took down his coat to leave. To Aaron's great annoyance Bobbie got his own coat and came out with him.

"Say, Aaron—"

"I'm going this way," Aaron interrupted. He lived in a different direction from Bobbie and Mac.

"That's okay, I'll walk with you a way. Say, Aaron, what's the matter? What's the matter lately?" Bobbie swung along beside him, though Aaron was walking quickly now.

"Lately?" Aaron said, with a nervous chuckle. "Nothing."

"I don't mean it's any of my business, Aaron, and I'm not trying to butt in, you understand, but if you've got some—well, some kick against any of us, it's better to tell us about it, isn't it?"

The "us" annoyed Aaron; it implied that all of them were ganged up against him. "I don't care to talk about it," Aaron said.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Oh." Bobbie looked more confused than he had all that day. "You mean, there *is* something, but you don't want to talk about it."

"That's right," Aaron said emphatically and with finality.

"Oh.—Well, Dad and I were wondering if you'd like to pitch horseshoes with us tomorrow afternoon around two. We don't work tomorrow. Veteran's Day, you know."

"I know." Did Bobbie think he was crazy? Not knowing tomorrow was a holiday? "They haven't the nerve to call it Armistice Day any more, have they? It's Veteran's Day."

Bobbie forced a chuckle. He was slowing his pace. "Well, do we see you tomorrow? Vince is coming, too. The weather's supposed to be good, and we'll have a couple of beers—"

Aaron stopped and stood up taller. "Sorry. No, thanks. I've got a few letters to write." He saw Bobbie's expression change to one of surprise and disbelief. Did Bobbie think there were no people in Aaron's life to whom he could write letters? "Thank you, anyway, Bobbie. Good night."

And Aaron walked away quickly before Bobbie could say another word.

That evening was hellish for Aaron. He felt he had failed himself, that he had been unforgivably cowardly in not killing Bobbie that day—or this evening, while walking along the dark sidewalks with him. He could not face his diary, or face writing the disgraceful entry that he had achieved nothing after promising himself and the diary that he would achieve something.

He was so angry with himself that he could not sleep. It was a wretched week-end.

On Monday, when Roger called him over to help with a lot of packages that were piling up on the counter, Aaron replied by saying very firmly and clearly, "You're dead."

Roger's mouth opened.

Bobbie stared at him.

A couple of people on the other side of the counter who had heard it looked blankly surprised. One of them smiled.

Aaron looked at Roger. That'll fix you, he thought, and, in fact, Roger looked quite scared.

"'S matter with *him*?" Roger asked Bobbie.

Bobbie went over to Aaron. "What's the matter, Aaron? You feeling okay?"

"I'm feeling fine, thank you," Aaron said defiantly, though he knew his eyes were bloodshot from not sleeping.

They persuaded Aaron to go home. They told him he looked very tired. He started to defy them, then quickly gave in. Why not go home? What was pleasant about staying in this overheated musical hellhole?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Aaron went home and recorded in his diary that he had informed Roger O'Hare that he was dead, and that he had upset the entire post office by this fact. Take a few days off, Mac had said at the last. What an insult! Were *they* giving *him* orders?

However, Aaron discovered that he did not at all mind taking a few days off. On the third day a letter arrived from Mac saying that he, Mac, and also Roger thought it would be a good idea for Aaron to see a doctor. They said they thought he had been working too hard, was under a strain, and that a doctor might prescribe just the right tonic.

The letter sounded like Vera.

Mac had even tried to make it funny, which Aaron did not appreciate. Mac said he would have called him, if Aaron had a telephone, and he would have come by to see him, but he did not want to intrude. The letter itself seemed to Aaron an intrusion, and, in fact, it was the last straw.

Aaron went back to work the next day. The Christmas rush was starting. It was the most hateful period of the year for Aaron, one he would gladly have avoided under pretense of needing a rest; but since a rest was what Mac thought he needed, he was not going to oblige him.

Aaron performed his odious duties: a score of seed catalogues had turned into hundreds and hundreds of meaningless greeting cards; little boxes of seeds and bulbs had burgeoned into a chaos of gigantic, unmanageable cartons. The kerosene stove seemed to dance with its own furious heat. Everybody was praying for a white Christmas and Muzak was doing its best, too, whining the song at least five times a day.

The white Christmas came, a bit early, on the 20th of December. It was the second big snow of the year and deep enough to last through the holiday, even if it did not snow again before the great day. Everybody in the post office hummed or whistled cheerfully, chatted longer with people on the other side of the counter, and showed unwonted patience with packages that were coming undone, that were overweight or oversize. Aaron knew why: a lot of people tipped the postal employees in Copperville at Christmas. Well, *he* wasn't going to butter anybody up for a measly dollar bill!

"You're overweight," Aaron would tell somebody bluntly, looking them straight in the eye. (It was the only kind of time he did look anyone straight in the eye.) Or, "This string's not going to hold, you can see that yourself," and if they didn't take the hint to go home and fix their packages, Aaron told them to in plain words.

When Mac overheard some of these conversations, he reached under the counter with a smile and pulled out a ball of twine and a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pair of scissors for the person, or suggested that the person open the package, remove something, then tie it up again right there in the post office. Finally, the ball of twine and scissors were kept on top of the counter, to Aaron's annoyance.

Aaron hated everyone in the post office more than ever, including the people who came in, and to make things worse he was too tired at night even to plan any more murders. But he did think of a bomb. If only one of the cartons that came into the post office were a time bomb, set to go off about twenty minutes after it arrived . . .

Aaron dreamed of making a bomb and bringing it in himself, as if it were a package he were mailing to someone. It wouldn't matter to whom, or even if his name were on the return address, because the package and everyone in the post office would be blown to smithereens. He himself could step out for a breath of air just before the bomb was set to go off.

But Aaron didn't know the first thing about making a bomb, even a homemade one. Nitroglycerin, of course, but how about the firing mechanism? Maybe connect it with an alarm clock? There might be some information in the Copperville Public Library, and Aaron intended to go there as soon as the rush let up and he was less tired.

On the day before Christmas, when the post office was merrier than ever and Mac had brought in a bottle of rye that everybody except Aaron slyly nipped at all day, Bobbie knocked over the kerosene stove. Aaron saw him lurch against it, losing his balance with two big cartons on one shoulder. He saw the stove tip over with a shrill scream of metal and crash to the floor, and in that instant Aaron knew what was going to happen and wished desperately that he had thought of tipping over the stove himself.

Bobbie gave a yell. Liquid flame flashed across the floor and continued to burn furiously. Out of the corner of his eye Aaron saw the cluster of people behind the counter break up and run out the front door, yelling for help. Mac was beating at the fire on the floor with a thin carton, something like a dress box.

"It's no good, it's no good!" Roger shouted, but he kept on stamping at the flames like a crazy dancer. His trouser cuffs were on fire now, and the black smoke was thickening.

Aaron was near the counter, and he had done nothing up to now but watch. The kerosene flowing from the stove, which had set a row of mailbags on fire, blocked the way to the back door with flame and smoke. The front door was the only exit, and when he realized this, Aaron acted instantly.

He reached for the big can of kerosene kept in reserve under the counter, the farthest spot from the stove. He unscrewed the top and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

turned the can over in a way that made the kerosene streak across the floor in front of the guillotine machine all the way to the side wall, where it sloshed back and a thin tongue of it went off at an angle as if in search of fire, which it found at once. Flame raced along the kerosene trail back to the can, and Aaron leaped away, ducking under the counter and out.

Behind him, he heard screams. The way to the front door was now shut off.

Aaron rushed into a couple of men who were on their way into the building, but they were not firemen and were not equipped with masks, so they couldn't get in. Aaron collapsed, shaking, on a snowbank at the edge of the sidewalk.

The fire engine clanged up, but by the time they had hosed the fire out through the door and the front windows, which they had broken with pikes, the post office was only a shell lined with smoking blackness. No one, Aaron knew from what he overheard among the watching people, had come out of the back door or the front—no one except him.

A policeman came up to speak to Aaron, and Aaron said at once, "I did it. On purpose. I pushed the stove over and spilled kerosene all over the floor."

To others who questioned him—firemen, the Chief of Police, and reporters from the *Copperville Voice*—Aaron said the same thing.

"He's probably in a state of shock. He doesn't know what he's saying," one incredulous bystander said.

"Oh, I don't know," said another voice. "He's an odd one. Hates everybody. I been noticing him for a long time."

And of course there were others who had noticed him, too.

Some of the victims' relatives, who stood in the crowd, could state that they had been hearing for months about Aaron's strange behavior, about his telling people that they were dead, and his obvious wishing that they were.

"If he says he did it, he did it," said one woman—Aaron thought it was Mac's wife.

Since Aaron absolutely believed he had done both things—upset the stove and spilled the reserve kerosene can—his story now sounded very convincing.

So the police finally took Aaron away—for his own protection. After a few days he was put into the State prison, where he chose to work in the laundry. The prison had one psychiatrist who held a group therapy session every week, and Aaron was made to attend it, but Aaron was not inclined to talk. His existence was boring, he admitted to himself, but he felt he had achieved something few men can or do achieve—the annihilation of people they despise. He had, therefore, a certain peace of mind, and he was a model prisoner.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

EUREKA POE

Edgar A. Poe, the acknowledged Father of the Detective Story, wrote three tales about C. Auguste Dupin, the world's first fictional detective in a modern sense.

The first of the first three detective stories was, of course, *The Murders in the Rue Morgue,* which appeared in "Graham's Magazine," Philadelphia, issue of April 1841. This tale of ratiocination (Poe's own word) was not a mere pioneering effort, or an experimental incunable; it was, and still is, a technical and artistic masterpiece, so influential that it spawned literally hundreds and hundreds of thousands of short stories—which might be called "detective descendants." Of *The Murders in the Rue Morgue,* Dorothy L. Sayers, creator of Lord Peter Wimsey, once wrote: it "constitutes in itself almost a complete manual of detective theory . . ."

The second Dupin story was *The Mystery of Marie Rogêt,* published as a 3-part serial in Snowden's "The Ladies' Companion," New York, issues of November and December 1842, and February 1843.

The third and final Dupin story—and artistically Poe's finest achievement in the genre he himself invented—was *The Purloined Letter,* in THE GIFT: 1845, Philadelphia, published late in 1844.

All three Dupin stories were included in Poe's TALES, New York, 1845 —the most important book of detective short stories ever published, from all possible viewpoints—historically, qualitatively, and bibliophilically (the rarity and value of the first edition). Howard Haycraft, the world's foremost historian of the detective story, wrote: "Thus, in the brief compass of only three slight narratives, Poe foretold the entire evolution of the detective romance as a literary form."

If we add Poe's fourth and last tale of detection (a non-Dupin story)— *Thou Art the Man,* in "Godey's Lady's Book," Philadelphia, issue of November 1844—it can be said, without the slightest fear of critical contradiction, that Poe laid down, for all time, the major principles of the detective story, even as we know its basic technique and boundaries today. Let us refresh your memory.

In *The Murders in the Rue Morgue,* Poe created the "pure" classical pattern: the eccentric amateur criminologist and his worshipful assistant, amanuensis, and/or sounding board; the crime that baffles the police; the wrongly suspected person; the motif of the locked room; and (oh, how it has challenged Poe's disciples!) the surprise solution.

In *The Mystery of Marie Rogêt,* Poe applied his almost fully developed technique to the solution of a real-life case.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In *The Purloined Letter*, Poe added the use of psychological deduction; and double bluff—surprise by means of the obvious rather than the unexpected, the simple rather than the subtle.

In *Thou Art the Man*, Poe rounded out and completed the now immutable principles—to the point where the myriad of detective-story writers who have followed in Poe's footsteps are left, as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of Sherlock Holmes, has said, "with no fresh ground they can confidently call their own." In *Thou Art the Man*, Poe invented the least-likely-person denouement; the laying of a false trail by the real criminal; psychological third degree to extort a confession; the anonymous sleuth; and in a truly magnificent anticipation of real life, the use of ballistics as a method of crime detection.

No wonder G. K. Chesterton, creator of Father Brown, wrote: "I do not think that America has ever lost that great Challenge Cup won long ago by one of her first literary champions; or rather designed by him with a craftsmanship that was entirely original . . ."

Three Dupin stories—no more, no less. "That's all there is, there isn't any more" . . . We remember that many years ago, when we were preparing to edit the first Ellery Queen anthology, we spent two weeks in the stacks of the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., searching desperately for a "lost" Dupin story, searching in vain for even a hint or fragment of an unknown or unpublished Dupin story . . .

And now a British author—no, not an American!—has dared to write a "new" Dupin tale. We say "dared" advisedly, because we confess that we would not have the courage ourselves to attempt such an audacious feat. Michael Harrison is a technical writer in the field of nucleonics and cybernetics, an historian of World War II, a cryptanalyst and archeologist; he obviously believes the mystery world needs and wants more tales of ratiocination featuring C. Auguste Dupin—and we agree completely.

So here is the first "new" Dupin story in more than than 120 years. Of course, realistically speaking, it is too much to hope that anyone can write an absolutely perfect pastiche of Poe, especially a completely faithful duplicate of Dupin—Mr. Harrison himself would, we are sure, be the first to admit this. As Mr. Harrison wrote to us, "Getting into the skin of Dupin is no easy matter." But who among us would quarrel with the proposition that any "new" Dupin is better than no new Dupin at all? Please don't misunderstand: Michael Harrison has performed a Herculean task. His "new" Dupin story is "near to the original," and makes fascinating reading. It is truly a 'tec tour de force.

ELLERY QUEEN

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE VANISHED TREASURE

a "hitherto unpublished" tale of C. Auguste Dupin

by MICHAEL HARRISON

I WAS STANDING BY THE WINDOW IN THE LITTLE BACK LIBRARY, OR BOOK-closet, of my friend, C. Auguste Dupin. It was a late afternoon in the Spring of 18—. Behind me, Dupin's man-servant, who had come unbidden into the room to put fresh coals on the fire, to light the lamps and to close the shutters, busied himself with his habitual tasks.

"Your pardon, sir," said the man-servant, coming up behind me to shut out, with the folding panels, the last of the day. I stepped aside; but, at that moment, I saw two men leave the opposite pavement, and quickly cross the road in the direction of Dupin's house, No. 33 Rue Dunôt, Faubourg St. Germain.

From the lamp-cast shadows behind me, I heard Dupin's voice—muffled, it seemed to me, by the curling eddies of tobacco-smoke which oppressed the atmosphere of the book-closet.

"If it is any point requiring reflection," observed Dupin, "you may reflect that the two men crossing the road are certainly coming to call on us."

"Dupin," I exclaimed, "this is not the first time that I have said, 'This is beyond my comprehension!' Yet once again, I do not hesitate to say that I am amazed—that I can scarcely credit my senses. How was it possible you should know that two men were crossing the road, when, to my certain knowledge, you have not stirred from your chair for at least an hour?"

"My friend," said Dupin in a kindly voice, but with a small chuckle of innocent pleasure at my puzzlement, "what would you say of my *incomprehensible* powers, were I to tell you that I know two men are crossing the road in the direction of this house, because, in the first place, I heard them stop at a point directly opposite—they were coming from the direction of the Rue des Saints Pères—and, because, in the second place, they resumed their walk in the direction of this house. Where else could they be making for? I would have thought it was of more importance to you to know *why* they were calling on me."

"You are convinced that they are coming to call on you?"

"I am assured of it. One man is known to us—I guess him to be Monsieur

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

G———, the Prefect of the Parisian police. The other is a stranger to us—and we to him."

"But how—? Dupin, you positively astonish me. Dark as it was, I did not recognize even Monsieur G———. I suppose you will now tell me the identity of the stranger?"

Dupin smiled, and touched the wide-brimmed hat which had been carelessly thrown down by him on his return from an unaccustomed stroll in the gardens of the Luxembourg.

"The *hat,* Dupin? But—"

I could say no more, for, at that moment, the man-servant threw open the door, and showed our visitors into the apartment.

They were, as Dupin had surmised, Monsieur G——— and a stranger. The Prefect of the Parisian police was, as usual, in the sombre type of dress favored by him: a tight frock of bottle-green English cloth, though with rather more black silk frogs than English *haut ton* ordained; a high, starched white collar which seemed to threaten his red ears; and a vast black silk stock, so tightly wound that it looked as though our poor Monsieur G——— was experimenting with a new form of strangulation. Only the scarlet button of the *Legion d'Honneur* in his coat collar relieved the dark incivility of his habit.

The Prefect's companion was tall, deeply sunburnt, and of a naturally commanding manner. He had a prominent nose, larger and more hawk-like even than that of Wellington; and his nose seemed the larger to me because of the quite extraordinary depth of the orbits in which his dark eyes blazed.

The stranger's face was half-familiar to me, but it was obvious that Dupin knew well who was honoring us with this evening call. Contrary to his usual manner of greeting G. and his companions, Dupin started up from his chair and gave the stranger a profound bow.

"Your Excellency does me too much honor," said Dupin, with another profound bow. "I expected one of three men who are at present in Paris—but need I say how gratified I am that it should turn out to be *you* whom I am honored in welcoming?"

"Ah, I see that you are not unacquainted with our distinguished visitor," Monsieur G——— broke in hurriedly. "But you will, I pray you, observe our *incognito.*"

"Pray take chairs, gentlemen," said Dupin. "You may go, Hyacinthe," he said to our man-servant; "I shall do myself the honor to wait upon our guests myself. You may rely, gentlemen, upon Hyacinthe's complete discretion in this affair.

"Now, gentlemen," Dupin continued, when our domestic had bowed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

himself out, and closed the door behind him, "may I offer you a glass of something to warm you after the chill of your walk? For his Excellency, I should like to recommend a fine Solera—year of 1776—hem! a fine year for both Solera and rebellions, eh, Excellency?"

Dupin poured out four glasses of the superb golden liquid, and I handed them around on a silver salver.

"Excellency, Monsieur le Prefet," said Dupin, lighting his meerschaum with a match kindled over the chimney of a lamp, "consider me entirely at your service. My friend here comes from *North* America—but, like mine, his sympathies have been completely engaged by certain stirring events in both *Central* and *South* America."

How I reproached myself then for my obtuseness. *Now* I realized the significance of Dupin's having called my attention to his hat. It was a hat of the type called a "Bolivar." It was the great Liberator of the Spanish Empire in America who sat beside our fire-place!

I looked eagerly toward the great Bolivar to explain the purpose of his visit, but it was Monsieur G——— who undertook to make all clear.

This was the story that Dupin and I heard that night from the lips of the Prefect of the Parisian police:

The Cathedral of San Isidro, of all the cathedrals in New Spain, was the richest in treasure. While there were others which had altars of solid silver, San Isidro's clergy and worshippers knelt in prayer before altars of solid gold. Legend said that the first Spanish priests to build a church in what afterward came to be the great port of Santissima Cruz had treated the native Indians with a quite unwonted tenderness, and that, in gratitude, the natives had yielded voluntarily the secret of a great treasure—a secret that torture had not been able to wrest from those Indians' murdered kinsmen.

Thus, as the Prefect told it, was the story of how the Cathedral of San Isidro, a few leagues distant from the port of Santissima Cruz, came to rank as the most splendid of all the splendid cathedrals of New Spain.

But, following on the upheaval of the American Revolution, fundamental changes occurred both in Europe and in those parts of America still under European control. Throughout the extensive dominions that Spain ruled across the Atlantic Ocean, the cupidity of Spain's foes and the revolutionary sentiment of Spain's colonial subjects combined to rob Spain, within a few years, of all but a trivial remnant of her overseas possessions.

The inspirer and—until recently—the controller of this near-Continental political and social upheaval was sitting in our small book-closet, drinking our wine, nibbling our sweet biscuits, listening with calm detachment

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to Monsieur G———'s clear account of how Spain, within a few years, had lost an empire richer and far more extensive than ancient Rome's.

Spain, however, fought valiantly to retain her imperial heritage, and in the continuing struggle—where, now, colonial armies were arrayed against each other—more and more arms were needed. The immense armories and arsenals of Europe could supply the needs of a thousand such wars—but arms or the means of manufacturing them were available only to those with gold to buy them.

Generally, between the revolutionists and the clergy there existed an unconquerable enmity—and the revolutionists scrupled nothing to plunder rich convents, monasteries, abbeys, churches, and cathedrals of their treasures, to buy arms in Europe.

"We come now," Dupin murmured, from out of a dense cloud of tobacco-smoke, "to the Treasure of San Isidro."

"Indeed, that is so," replied the Prefect. "A party of revolutionists, under the command of General—of General—what was his name, Excellency?"

"It is of no consequence," said the Liberator, "and I surmise that Monsieur Dupin himself could tell us the General's name—"

"Felipe Cisneros y Mola, I should venture," said Dupin. "Ah! I perceive that I have surmised aright. Yet, I ask myself, who but the extremely unreliable General Cisneros could trouble your Excellency's mind so much?"

"The Senor Don Felipe Cisneros," said Bolivar, taking up the narrative, "was one of the most daring and opportunistic of all the generals who fought under my command for the liberation of New Grenada. It was he who captured—stole—however you wish to call it, gentlemen—the treasure of San Isidro; though, to be sure, he stole it by means of a trick unworthy of a *caballero*—"

"How so, Don Simon?" I asked.

"Well, let it suffice to say that, unhindered by the presence of either witnesses or opponents, Don Felipe and his troops stripped the cathedral and other buildings of San Isidro of all their treasure—taking first, of course, the world-renowned Golden Altar."

Dupin looked up sharply.

"Was your Excellency there, at the robbery?" he asked, in a tone that both G. and I knew well, but which was new to Bolivar. The fiery Spaniard drew himself up with a proud gesture.

"Senor! How dare you!"

"I wondered," said Dupin, in no way intimidated by this display of Castilian histrionics, "how your Excellency could possibly know which object was taken first—if your Excellency was not there, and there were no witnesses to the theft."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Bolivar nodded his generous acceptance of the rebuke.

"I—I was carried away," he said.

"I understand. But let us, gentlemen, confine ourselves strictly to fact. To continue, Don Simon: you say all the treasure was taken?"

"To the value of five milliards of francs. Yes, gentlemen, about two hundred millions of pounds sterling, or one thousand millions of New York dollars."

At this calm mention of so vast, so unimaginable, a sum, even Dupin lost his habitual air of detachment. I gasped in astonishment, and the effect upon Monsieur G——— was galvanic. Dupin sat up in his chair, laying aside his meerschaum pipe.

"This is an immense, a gigantic, sum," said Dupin. "It is also, if you follow me, an essentially *dangerous* sum. Money in quantities so prodigious may never be employed save for ill purposes. To paraphrase the words of a German writer, such a sum does not permit itself to be used for good. In the hands even of an honest man—but in the hands of a bold, unscrupulous, and essentially foolish adventurer—"

"Ah!" said the Liberator.

"Such a man," Dupin continued, "could invoke catastrophe on a scale which might involve all mankind in ruin. You think, Excellency, that Don Felipe still has the treasure?"

"That, my dear sir," said the Prefect of the Parisian police, "is what we have come to ask *you* to tell *us*."

"Permit me to explain," said the Liberator. "Don Felipe, as I said, removed the treasure from San Isidro. He loaded it in convenient portions onto pannier-mules—very many mules, to be sure—and transported the treasure, not only safely over the five leagues distance to Santissima Cruz, but managed to load it into a very fast schooner—originally built for the United States Navy, but sold after the end of the war with Great Britain. I mention the origin of this fine vessel, Monsieur, to explain how it was that Don Felipe was able to show his heels to a Spanish naval corvette, herself extremely fast, which came upon the scene in time to give chase to Don Felipe and the treasure.

"The rest," continued our visitor, "is quickly told. For several days, the Spanish corvette, hardly more than a dozen cable-lengths from her quarry, kept Don Felipe's ship in sight."

"Well within range of even the lightest of the Spaniard's guns," said Dupin drawlingly. "Why did her Captain not send a shot across Don Felipe's bows?"

"Well, in the first place," replied the Liberator, "it appeared that Don Felipe's master had set a course for Europe—and it would have been even

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

more difficult for Don Felipe to avoid capture in European waters than on the open Atlantic. Then, in the second place, the Captain hardly cared to risk the immense treasure that Don Felipe was carrying—"

"It may well be," murmured Dupin, who had, by now, recovered his habitual phlegm. "But a carronade of chain-shot would merely have dismasted her, without danger of sinking her. What made the Spanish Captain so certain that Don Felipe was heading for Europe? The course? Oh, very well. Tell me, Excellency, is Don Felipe of Spanish descent?"

The change of subject was so abrupt that the Liberator was taken aback. He looked sharply at Dupin, but Dupin merely repeated his question.

"Well," said the Liberator, with apparent reluctance, "It is clear that he is a *mestizo*—of mixed blood. But many do say that the amount of *sangre azul* in Don Felipe's veins is small indeed."

"Do you mean," said Dupin, "that he is what you call, in Spanish, *un hijo de nada*—'the son of a nobody'? Or do you mean that there is little or none of purely Spanish 'blue blood' in the Don?"

"It is a curious thing," said our visitor, staring reflectively into the fire, "that you should have raised this point. It is, indeed, something of a joke that Don Felipe claims—but no! I shall not trouble you with such idle stories."

"You were about to say," Dupin observed calmly, "that Don Felipe claims to be—or is even reputed to be—a person of rank, perhaps even a Prince. Among the Indians?"

"You astonish me more and more, Monsieur Dupin. I took the tale—idle though I thought it—seriously enough to look into it. I thought Don Felipe might use it as an excuse for establishing himself into a Prince by right, as it were."

"With five milliards of francs he could do so easily. But what did your inquiries show?"

"That there was no truth in Don Felipe's claim."

"Hem! Tell me, Excellency, the people of San Isidro—are *they* of pure Spanish descent?"

"Rather not! They are all pure—or nearly pure—Aztecs."

"You interest me more and more," said Dupin.

"Indeed! But let me tell you more of the chase."

"Ah, yes, we had almost forgotten the chase."

"The pursued ship held steadily to an easterly course."

"Until, suddenly," said Dupin, with an air of bringing the subject to a head, "the look-out in the Spaniard's crow's-nest reported that every bit of canvas, from top-gallant studding-sail to fore-topmast stay-sail, was being bent in the quarry. Soon, only the look-out could see Don Felipe's ship,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hull down on the horizon. And soon—very soon—she was lost to sight even to him. She had slipped away. And then—?"

"You seem to know the whole story, Monsieur," observed the Liberator, in astonishment.

"I can guess that Don Felipe was picked up again—"

"Now this is positively diabolical!" said the Liberator, starting up from his chair. "How on earth could you know that?"

"You have already told me," said Dupin patiently. "Or have you not been listening to your own recital? Don Felipe's ship was sighted, overhauled, and stopped. Don Felipe then made what you now know to have been a mere *show* of resistance. An immediate search of the schooner was ordered by the Spanish Captain—and nothing of value was found. Tell me, Excellency, what was the name of the island to which *it was obvious* Don Felipe had gone to bury the treasure, during the hours when he and his ship were out of sight?"

"It is the island of La Concepcion—about three hundred leagues due east of Cape Catoche. But I cannot understand how you know all this—"

"It is immaterial that you should wonder. Convenient La Concepcion—discovered by the Portuguese, who were unable or unwilling to effect a settlement there. Half a dozen nations have claimed it—and abandoned it. And now, so I have been reading lately, the English want it. Excellency," said Dupin softly, yet with a world of meaning, "did you have the least idea of the complications into which the simple pursuit of liberty must inevitably drag you?"

"Before God, I did not!" the Liberator cried, his dark eyes flashing. "Already, the people whom I helped on the road to freedom have gone far beyond what I had planned. The road that they *now* follow is *not* the road of freedom. Personal ambitions have jostled aside the ideal of the Common Good—"

"Caveant consules!" Dupin murmured.

"Precisely, my dear sir. *Ne quid detrimenti respublica capiat!"* the Liberator answered, completing the well-known cry by which the senate of ancient Rome advised the republic of danger. "And now, at last, I find myself conspiring—yes, gentlemen, that is the word, *conspiring*—with the independent republics' former masters to contrive that the liberty I gained for those republics shall not degenerate into anarchical tyranny."

"But, Don Simon," I cried, "Spain will not lift a finger to help the colonies which broke away from her rule!"

"I think differently," said Dupin. "Yes, Excellency, Spain may yet show as much political acumen as England has shown."

"So it is to be hoped," said Don Simon. "But before we can decide to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

risk Spain's displeasure by arranging for Great Britain to acquire La Concepcion, we must not only decide which country—Spain or England—is the more likely and the more able to assist us, we must first find the Treasure. Until that is found, we cannot let La Concepcion go to *any* other nation."

"For, of course," said Dupin, "the most meticulous search of the island failed to reveal the least trace of treasure? No *recherchés* places of concealment. I am not surprised. Well, gentlemen," puffing furiously at his meerschaum, "how do you propose that my services should be employed?"

Monsieur G——— leaned forward in his eagerness.

"By examining Don Felipe—"

"Ah! So! Then you have him—?"

"Safely under lock and key. We have confidence in your skill, Dupin." Dupin here bowed sarcastically—but mere sarcasm was always lost on Monsieur G———. "We are convinced that your cunning will extract the truth from this thief."

"When your own less subtle methods have failed, eh?" With a contempt so open that G——— flushed with anger, Dupin said, "I am not—thank God!—one of your police-officers, to examine even those proved to be thieves."

"He *is* a thief," said the Prefect of police, starting up from his chair. It was plain to see that Dupin's contempt had succeeded, at last, in piercing the Prefect's very thick skin. "He *is* a thief! You have heard his Excellency tell you so!"

"Agreed that I have heard his Excellency's charges. I have yet to hear what evidence his Excellency brings in support of those charges. And what interest has the Kingdom of France in the matter?"

"None. This is not political—"

Dupin whistled. "Not political?"

"Dupin, you take a pleasure in teasing me. I mean, this is a simple matter of a suspected felon's being taken into custody on the complaint of—of—well, of his Excellency."

"I am interested in the fact that you stumbled just then. You wished to say, 'on the complaint of the owner of the stolen treasure.' But, of course, since Don Simon is *not* the Lord Archbishop of San Isidro—forgive me, Don Simon, but just what is *your* interest in the matter?"

"Gentlemen," said the Liberator, "in the strict legal sense I represent nobody. I can lay no legal claim to this treasure. I admit it. But I swear, by all that I hold sacred—by my parents, by my country, and by my God—that I desire to find this treasure only so that it may never be used for evil. So then, will you help me, Monsieur Dupin?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Come, Dupin: why the scruples?" G——— urged in his ill-bred way. "You could have this most important information out of the man within a few minutes. You yourself remarked that he was a fool—"

"I said no such thing. I said that he was essentially foolish, which is by no means the same thing. Tell me, Excellency, what was this ungentlemanly trick by which Don Felipe is supposed to have sent away the entire population of San Isidro while he was robbing the cathedral and other church establishments of their gold?"

"The story is that he sent a spurious Government official to warn the inhabitants that a plague had broken out."

"And they all went—even the cripples and the old and the dying? Without taking even a few personal possessions? Extraordinary! Does not this total migration—total, I say, to the point at which *not one witness remained* —strike you as being quite exceptional?"

"I never really considered the matter. Is it important?"

"It is *most* important. In resolving problems, we cannot choose the facts to suit a preconceived solution. We must find—and accept—all the facts. Now: do you know the present market price of gold?"

Had Dupin asked our visitors what was the price of a ticket to the moon, they could not have looked more astonished. I had much difficulty, even though I used my pocket-handkerchief, in repressing a burst of laughter. Dupin, coolly dismissing the effect that his question had upon Don Simon and G———, turned to me.

"Pray ring for Hyacinthe."

I gave the bell-pull a tug, and soon afterward we heard the footsteps of the man-servant on the stairs. As Hyacinthe entered the room, Dupin said, "Hyacinthe, pray be so good as to go at once to Fouquet, Rue Croix des Petits Champs, and return here with a *voiture*. Tell the driver that we shall be leaving Paris by the Porte de Vincennes."

As Hyacinthe hurried off to execute this commission G——— said suspiciously, "The Porte de Vincennes? You have decided, then, Monsieur, to question this Don Felipe?"

"You are right," said Dupin carelessly. "We *are* going to the Chateau de Vincennes. Monsieur le Prefet, you gave the order for Don Felipe's arrest; can you give the order for his release? Have you that power?"

"Naturally, I have that power," said Monsieur G———, indignantly.

"Excellent. For that is what we are about to do—go to Vincennes to release Don Felipe. Come, gentlemen, a glass of Solera before we set out?"

The night had turned blustery as we stepped into the musty interior of the *voiture,* the ragged flame of Hyacinthe's lamp sending the tat-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tered shadows bounding across the gray cloth lining the carriage. The vehicle dipped and swayed as, the Liberator first, we all got in, and Hyacinthe shouted to the driver, high on his box: "Haste for the Chateau de Vincennes!"

It was a vehicle of English make, well-sprung, but built high. Fouquet's horses were always good, and we expected to reach Vincennes well within two hours, allowing for the much denser traffic within Paris itself.

The Prefect of Parisian police was in a surly mood. He feared that the initiative, in a matter concerning only the police, had been taken away from him. It displeased him, too, that Dupin had failed to give what G——— would have called a "satisfactory reason" for insisting upon the immediate release of Don Felipe.

But now, as we swung out of the Rue Dunôt into the Rue des Saints Pères, Dupin said, "Let us return to the price of gold. Do you know the present market price of this precious metal?—I mean, its price on the bourses of Paris, London, New York, St. Petersburg? No? Then permit to tell you. Today's *Moniteur* gave the price, on the Paris bourse, as a little over four hundred francs a hectogram."

"Twenty American dollars an ounce, in our reckoning," I remarked.

"Excellency," said Dupin, quite ignoring my interpolation, "how many mules did Don Felipe have with him, to take the treasure away from San Isidro?"

"How many *mules?* How on earth should *I* know? It was a sufficient quantity, that's obvious. Otherwise—"

"Yes? Otherwise—"

"Otherwise he could not have achieved his purpose."

"Excellency," said Dupin, "I cannot fail to perceive that my questions are irritating you, rendering you impatient. But I, too, might feel justified in expressing some annoyance at what *I* find to be *your* inability to perceive the facts from which the proper conclusions may be drawn.

"We shall merely mention the incredible fact that Don Felipe's supposed rumor of plague emptied San Isidro *completely*—so that not one single witness remained.

"We come now to the conclusions to be drawn from the mules—"

"From the *mules!*"

"The common beast of burden in your part of the world, Excellency. I wish to call your attention to the number of mules that Don Felipe must have employed. Have you calculated that number, Excellency?"

"I have not," said Don Simon arrogantly. "I am not an invoice clerk."

"Evidently," said Dupin drily. "Yet *someone* had to calculate the number. How many mules are needed to transport a certain amount of gold—

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

five leagues, did you say?—five leagues from San Isidro to Santissima Cruz? I think you will agree that there would have had to be a great number of mules."

"So many—? Mules can carry a large burden."

"It is easily calculated in one's head," said Dupin. "It is a pity that someone on *your* side did not make the simple calculation before. Based on the normal load for a mule in Spanish America, which I take to be about double that of the permitted load for a French saddle-horse—that is to say, a Spanish mule carrying some fifty kilograms, and deliberately *not* providing a single replacement for a mule going lame or dropping dead, my calculations show that, to transport five milliards of the precious metal would require—twenty-eight thousand mules."

"In a desperate situation," the Prefect cried, "no one would hesitate to ask a mule to carry twice his normal load."

"In a desperate situation," said Dupin, with a smile, "no well-bred mule would hesitate to comply with so reasonable a request. Twice the load reduces the number of mules required to a mere fourteen thousand. Were there vast numbers of mules milling about the docks after Don Felipe escaped in the schooner? Obviously not. Where did they go—fourteen thousand mules—after Don Felipe had finished with their services?"

"But what is the answer, Monsieur Dupin? There must be an answer."

"There is. There is always an answer. Let me tell you what the answer is. Because you did not find the treasure in Don Felipe's ship, Excellency, you assumed that he had hidden it during the only period when his ship was out of sight of the pursuing Spaniard. You reasoned that he had not thrown it overboard, for to have done so would have been to render himself powerless. You—oh, but the really important questions you never asked: such as, why did *all* the people leave San Isidro? How much does gold weigh? How much can a mule carry? But I *did* ask myself these questions—they were simple questions, and the answer is a simple one, too. All the clews were in full view . . .

"The people did not leave San Isidro—neither did they watch the robbery. They simply stayed out of sight while that which had to be done was done. To them it was a simple act of justice. Why should they interfere? Or talk? As for the mules, their vast number is of no importance. For, gentlemen, *there were no mules.*"

"No mules!" we cried in unison.

"Any more," said Dupin calmly, "than there was a robbery. You should have paid far more attention, Excellency, to those supposedly fanciful tales of Don Felipe's descent. Don Felipe's blood, I think, will prove to be as blue as that of the proudest conquistador—though, to be sure,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Don Felipe derives his descent from some Prince of the Indies, and not from a King of Spain.

"Within a few minutes, Don Felipe will be able to clear up some obscurities, but I suggest that, with your independent republic of New Grenada threatened with anarchy, Don Felipe foresaw that time was not far distant when the Treasure of San Isidro would be gravely menaced—whether to buy guns in Europe or to finance some ambitious man's exile in Europe, who can say?

"You said that, in return for the monks' and priests' kindness toward the Indians of San Isidro, those Indians had given their treasure to the church. Say, rather, that the Indians had entrusted their treasure for safe-keeping to men whom they believed to be good and honest. But now, when danger threatened, Don Felipe, lord of the Indians of San Isidro, took back the treasure. He is no robber, Excellency, who repossesses that which is his people's by right. Driver," cried Dupin, pushing up the hatch with the ferrule of his ebony walking-cane, "we cannot now be far from Vincennes?"

"We are almost there, sir. A few more minutes," came the muffled voice of the Jehu.

"We shall be picking up another gentleman. After that, drive as fast as you can, back to Paris. Don't dawdle—but take us to the Café Procope." He let the hatch drop. "Don Felipe may take some soothing—but the dinner at the Café Procope is always first-rate."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR: **DON KNOWLTON**

TITLE: ***A Call from the Devil***

TYPE: Detective Story

LOCALE: United States

TIME: The Present

COMMENTS: *When a grandfather is retired and has too much time on his hands, and is a natural-born snoop—beware! And reader: we warn you—don't jump to conclusions!*

MY GRANDDAUGHTER CALLED HIM "the old curmudgeon." Hardwater, his name was. Not that he was so old. I'd say he was in his late forties, but of course that was old to her.

It was one of the queerest things I ever got mixed up in. If I wasn't so snoopy I'd never have got involved in it at all.

They're always talking about what a retired man can do. Well, I'll tell you one thing he can do: he can try to keep a great-grandchild from sucking his thumb. But that gets kind of tedious after a while, if you're just sitting around. So I'd take the boy out for a walk in his gocart, and while I kept one eye on his thumb I'd keep the other on the neighborhood. That was on my first visit to my granddaughter, in May—no, late April—five years ago. I stay a while with her every spring.

Well, about this Hardwater. There was a house on the other side of the street, a short distance from my granddaughter's, that had me puzzled. It looked sort of starved, that house did. It was too narrow. And it always needed paint. They'd been grading down there before the house was built, and the soil was bare clay. They hadn't hauled in any topsoil, so the grass on the lawn was sparse. There were no trees, no shrubs, no flowers. There were vacant lots, full of weeds, on both sides. The place made you unhappy just to look at it.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I asked my granddaughter about it.

"Oh," she said, "that's where the old curmudgeon lives."

I kept at her about it, and this is what she told me.

Hardwater was a teller in a bank. He never spent a cent he didn't have to. He walked to and from work every day, about a mile and a half, just to save bus fare. He brought his own lunch and always carried an umbrella.

I saw Hardwater and his wife one Sunday. They were on their way home from church. He was thin as a fishing rod and she was even thinner. He looked like a deacon only more so, and she—well, if you can imagine an old maid missionary who lived on nothing but soup and lemon rind you'd come close to it.

I don't notice clothes usually—all I get is a general impression. My granddaughter told me that she didn't think Mrs. Hardwater had had a new dress or a new coat in ten years. She said the seat of Hardwater's pants was so shiny you could use it for a mirror.

"I see them in the grocery, he and his wife," she said. "He prices everything they shop for. Then when it's time to pay he takes out a shabby little black purse like the ones old ladies carry and counts out the money. He won't let her handle a penny."

Come to think of it, there was no aerial on Hardwater's house. And he didn't have a car. Or a child. Or even a cat or dog. Friends? No, said my granddaughter. They never went anywhere and never had visitors, so far as she knew. Any help in the house? Even a cleaning woman, now and then? She said no.

It made the shivers run up and down my back. There was something terribly wrong in that household. It could be the woman, of course, but I thought more likely it was the man. She looked to me past all smiling, but I judged he *never* had been able to smile. I got the feeling there was something really evil about that man. I calculated he must be up to some sort of skulduggery.

But then my stay was over, and I forgot all about the Hardwaters until I came back to my granddaughter's the following spring.

It was late April again. My great-grandson had quit sucking his thumb—but there was a new baby in the house, a girl, and what with one kid and the other I was kind of busy. But I got out and around, and when I went past Hardwater's house one evening I saw him digging a trench along the back line of his lot.

The next day was Saturday, and he was at it early. By afternoon I saw what he was up to. He was taking thornbushes out of one of the vacant lots and was planting them for a hedge across the back of his place. He must have kept at it even after dark, because by Sunday morning the job was done.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Now *why* did he want that hedge? There was no house behind his, and nothing to screen off. Of course what a lot of people want doesn't make much sense. Folks will dig up a patch in their front lawn the shape of a cookie and stick a half-dead spruce tree in it, fill up the spaces with petunias, and then sit and look at it and like it. Maybe Hardwater thought a hedge would look nice. And he didn't pay anything for it, I noticed that.

But somehow it seemed queer. He'd never done anything else about fixing up the yard, front or back.

Some days later my granddaughter and I passed Hardwater on the street, and we nodded.

"His wife must be away," my granddaughter remarked. "I haven't seen her at the store or anywhere for a week or so."

Well—that was all about the Hardwaters for that spring.

So now we come to my third visit to my granddaughter's; and that year I didn't get there until the first week in June. Right away I took a walk around to see how things were looking. I like to do that—see what folks have planted in their yards, keep watch of trees and see how they are growing.

That night I said to my granddaughter, at supper, "Hardwater's hedge caught on all right. Looks as if every one of those thornbushes he transplanted has lived."

She gave me the queerest sort of look.

"Grandpa," she said, "there's something strange going on there. You know his wife never came back? The last time I saw her was just before you got here last spring. And he's been living there all by himself and cooking his own meals, so far as anyone knows, and the shape that house is in by now must be something dreadful. And there's a light on in his house every now and then at two or three o'clock in the morning—I see it when I get up to feed the baby."

"He's probably got indigestion from eating his own cooking," I told her. But that wasn't what I was thinking. Not at all. Everything I'd thought about Hardwater came flooding back. I remembered his wife's face, and the way my granddaughter said he doled out the pennies, and how mean his house always looked, almost as mean as he did.

I got to thinking about stories of men possessed by demons, and the evil eye, and I could imagine a witch flying in on a broomstick to keep a 3 A.M. date with Hardwater. Of course that was all pretty silly, but my curiosity was stirred up, and when that happens I'm a goner. I just had to know more about it.

So the next morning I took my grandson by the hand and walked him down the street as far as Hardwater's. The boy fell down a lot but he tried hard. I don't know what

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I thought I'd get out of staring at Hardwater's house, but that's what I did.

Then I noticed the thing about the hedge. It was all alive, all growing—but scantily and rather sickly, all except one stretch about six feet long, in the middle. The growth on that part was twice as big as the rest. The leaves on most of the bushes were small and yellowish, but the leaves on that six-foot section were large and deep dark green.

Now it stands to reason that if one part of a hedge grows twice as well as the rest of it, there must be some cause for it. And that's when it hit me.

Hardwater had killed his wife and buried her under that six-foot stretch!

That's why he put the hedge in! He had to have an excuse for digging. He'd never have put in a hedge just to make the yard look better. That's what had bothered me from the beginning.

The first thing I wanted to do was to get my grandson away from there. I felt guilty even thinking about murder with one hand, you might say, while I was holding him with the other. So we went back home, and along in the afternoon I sneaked back by myself to the Hardwater place.

He was at work downtown, of course. There was nobody around. So this time I walked to the hedge in the rear and studied it.

There was no getting around the story told by that hedge. In that part of the country if you go down more than eighteen inches you come to shale. Under that six-foot stretch of healthy hedge I found plenty of flakes of shale. That meant deep digging. And there wasn't any shale under any other part of the hedge.

The evidence was as plain as the hump on a camel. But what should I do about it?

I puzzled over it for several days. Then I got an idea. There was a doctor, his name was Graves, who lived on the next street. I played chess with him, off and on. He was about my age. Didn't practice any more. Years ago he'd been County Coroner.

Graves was the place to start.

Well, Doc Graves said I was plumb crazy. I tried to reason with him, but it was no use.

"Look," he said, "even if it made sense, which it doesn't, do you think for one minute the Sheriff would pay any attention to such a crackpot idea? Nobody's reported the woman missing, have they? You expect them to arrest Hardwater just because one thornbush is greener than another? You think a couple of detectives might come out and dig secretly in the middle of the night? His wife's gone away, that's all. Maybe she's visiting her mother in New Zealand or something. Maybe she's left him for good—which would serve him

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

right. And why do you bother your head about it anyhow?"

That last question I couldn't answer. It's just the way I'm made, I guess. Of course Doc Graves was right, according to common sense, but common sense was something I never had too much of. Oh, I kept my mouth shut—I didn't say a word to another soul about it, least of all my granddaughter. But it still wasn't just an accident that six feet of Hardwater's hedge was greener than the rest.

So I thought the old curmudgeon could do with a little studying. I managed to be in the grocery store when he was. It positively hurt him to pay money for food. He would haggle over the price of a bunch of radishes. Oh, he was doing his own cooking all right, I could see that, what there was of it. He always looked as if he'd just been sucking on a pickle, but I never saw him buy one.

In church he never spoke to anybody—he just nodded. He sang real loud, and he listened hard to the sermon, and he put a dime in the collection plate as if it were a crown jewel. And sometimes you would see tears running down his cheeks.

So I began to get a little different idea of the man. I'd thought of him as altogether evil, a pious hypocrite. But now I began to wonder. Now he looked more like a soul in torment.

What went on nights in his house? My granddaughter said he put lights on at strange times. Well, I had to find out. My granddaughter is one of those birdwatchers, and she had a pair of binoculars. I took those along and sneaked out late, after she'd gone to bed. Sometimes at two or three in the morning. Every now and then a light would go on in one of Hardwater's downstairs rooms, and then I'd take a look. I'd even steal right up to the window. Yes, you can call me a peeper, if you want to. It won't bother me.

What do you suppose Hardwater was doing? Believe it or not, most of the time he was *praying!* Think that's strange? Well, I ask you, if you'd killed your wife and buried her under a hedge, wouldn't *you* be praying? Sometimes he'd kneel and bow his head, and sometimes he'd stand up and lift his hands high, sort of imploring. And sometimes he'd sit and read the Bible and then bust out crying.

It was a rather awful sight. But considering what I was sure he'd done, I couldn't feel sorry for him. I did figure, though, that he couldn't go on much longer the way he was. The only way he could get peace of mind would be to confess and take his punishment.

It struck me I might hurry things along a bit. So one night I called Hardwater on the telephone at about two o'clock in the morning. When he answered I said, "This is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the Devil speaking. I'm *waiting* for you." And I hung up.

I don't suppose I should have done it, but I did.

A day or so later I left for my summer shack in Maine. All the way up on the bus I wondered what was going on in Hardwater's mind. Did that phone call of mine mean to him that someone was on to him? Or in the state he was in, might he have thought it really was the Devil on the line? Either way he ought to be churning toward a breaking point.

Well, I found the shack in good shape and got some groceries and settled in, and next morning, while I was making pancakes and watching a couple of loons on the lake, a boy came down from the hotel to say that there was a call for me on long distance.

I hurried over there and got the operator. I was afraid something had happened in the family. And who do you suppose it was, calling me? Doc Graves. He was laughing fit to die.

"I just want to tell you," he said, "that your man Hardwater has confessed."

"He has!" I said. "Then he *did* kill his—"

That's as far as I got.

"No!" Doc yelled. "That's why I phoned you. It hasn't anything to do with his wife. He's confessed to embezzling $5,000 from the bank where he works!"

How Doc chuckled!

"I'll send you a clipping from the paper," he said. "I figured it was worth spending a couple of dollars on a phone call just to prove to you what a goldarn idiot you are!"

I sure had the wind taken out of my sails. Oh, I could see the picture now. Money was Hardwater's love. As a bank teller, money was before him every day. He had yielded to temptation and had embezzled. But he was a religious man, he knew he had committed a sin, and he was a-feared. I didn't say afraid —I said a-feared. You may be afraid of a lion or a tiger, but you're a-feared of the Almighty. That's what he was. And I reckoned that phone call from the Devil must have come in rather handy, as I judged it would. It must have sort of nudged him.

So that was that. Two days later I received the newspaper clipping.

It said that Silas Hardwater, who for twenty years had been a teller at the First Trust, had walked into the office of the president of the bank and confessed he had stolen $5,000, and had successfully covered it up.

But here was the amazing part. Hardwater then pulled $5,000 in hundred dollar bills out of his pocket and said, "Here's the money, I want to make restitution, but I also wish to be punished. I desire to be prosecuted and put in jail, so that I may do penance." Those were his exact words.

The president of the bank was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

only too willing to oblige. He said it was a matter of principle, though I suspect what he couldn't stand was that Hardwater had been able to put one over on him. Anyhow, there was a trial, and Hardwater was sentenced to two years in jail. I didn't learn all that for some time, and by then I had cooled off on the whole business. Sure I'd been wrong, and Doc Graves had a perfect right to say, "I told you so."

But every once in a while I'd wake up in the night and ask myself, "Darn it, why *should* that six feet of hedge have grown so much better than the rest of it?"

About a year and a half later, in March, I opened a letter from my granddaughter and a clipping fell out. Here's what it said:

Body Found Buried Under Hedge

Workmen digging the trench for the new connecting sewer unearthed the body of a woman yesterday afternoon. It had been buried under the hedge at the back of a residence owned by Silas Hardwater, now serving a jail term for embezzlement. The body was identified by the teeth as being that of Mrs. Hardwater. Present tenants in the house said it was all a mystery to them. Neighbors, however, reported that Mrs. Hardwater had, as they said, "just disappeared" several years ago.

Now I won't say I'm a vain man, but if I had been a rooster I'd have got up on a fence and crowed. Of course he'd killed her! I knew it all the time. I could hardly wait till I visited my granddaughter's again and saw Doc Graves.

I got there in early April, and Doc was expecting me.

The first thing I said to him was, "Is the date set yet for the Hardwater murder trial?"

"There isn't going to be any trial," he told me. "Hardwater's in the insane asylum."

Then he made me sit down and listen.

As soon as the body was identified, the police naturally confronted Hardwater. In the Warden's office. But they couldn't get a confession out of him. In fact, they couldn't get anything out of him except a lot of babbling about a "visitation" for his sins, and heaven and hell and the hereafter. And then he shouted, "But don't take my money!"

What money? They didn't know and he wouldn't say.

He got so incoherent they had to give it up. It was the Warden who was the first to realize that Hardwater was insane. They had an examination, and he was committed—you can't try a crazy person for murder. So the police called it quits, and were glad to forget it.

Now in Hardwater's belongings there was a key to a safe-deposit box. If there was anything of value there, it would have to be handed over to a guardian appointed by

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the court. When the box was opened, they found in it some $37,000 in cash, and a series of notebooks with entries in a cramped sort of spidery hand. The judge (he knew Doc well) had appointed Doc Graves as Hardwater's guardian. That was how Doc knew so much about the case. He'd since visited Hardwater in the asylum. And here's Hardwater's story, as Doc told it to me.

Hardwater was a born pinchpenny. He had that kind of soul. You'd have thought he would have put the nickels and dimes he squeezed out in a regular savings account. But that wasn't what he wanted. He wanted to be able to pick up money and look at it, feel it in his hands. He wouldn't get any kick out of an entry in a bankbook. It was the bills themselves that fascinated him.

So he hid them in the house. Then when they began to pile up, he rented a safe-deposit box in the Second National to keep them in. Noontime, two or three times a week, he'd go over there and get his safe-deposit box out, take it to one of those private little cubbyholes, sit there eating the lunch he'd brought wrapped in newspaper, and take those bills out and gloat over them.

And at home? Spend less on this, cut down on that. Every dime saved was a victory. What a life his wife must have led!

And then think of him there in his teller's cage, in the First Trust. Dollars, hundreds of dollars, thousands of dollars, passing over his counter every day. Bills stacked high in his cage. He must have drooled over them all day long.

Now Hardwater was a religious man, an earnestly religious man. The idea of God and the Devil competing to see which would get a man's soul was very real to him. He stayed on God's side until by accident he discovered a way to steal money from the bank without being caught. Then the Devil whispered in his ear and Hardwater stole $5,000.

But there was no peace for him after that. He knew he'd sinned, and it haunted him. But he couldn't bring himself to give back the money! Fifty nice crisp $100 bills! They were just too beautiful.

So he stewed and prayed and muttered until my phone call, I guess, gave him a hellfire scare. You see how logical it was for him to insist, after he took the money back, that he go to jail. He had to be punished. He had to atone for his sin.

Now about those notebooks they'd found in his safe-deposit box. Hardwater had kept a record of every cent he'd spent, and for what every single day. Meat 57¢ socks 50¢, and so on. Go through those books, and there was nothing ever spent on amusement—not one cent. Nothing spent on anything they didn't have to have. Money

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

spent on his wife? A few sad entries, far apart, mostly for cheap clothes. A few doctor bills. And that was all.

"It's hard to tell just when he went over the borderline," I said to Doc Graves, "but I'd say that by the time he killed his wife he was definitely crazy. You can see what happened—how he resented more and more every cent he had to spend on her, how he figured out there would be that much more he could put away in that box if she weren't around."

That's when Doc gave me a wicked grin.

"But he didn't kill her," Doc said.

I stared.

"No," Doc went on, "she died of a heart attack. There was a note in his little book about a doctor's bill, about that time, and I went to see the doctor. He said she had a very bad heart condition, that nothing could be done for her, and he'd told Hardwater that she might topple over any day, without warning. Hardwater says that's what she did."

"But if that's true," I asked Doc, "*why* did he bury her under the hedge?"

"You must be just plain dumb," Doc said. "Haven't you figured it out yet? He did it because he was *too danged tight to pay money to an undertaker!*"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a **LORD PETER WIMSEY** *novelet*

Only three years before, Mrs. Standish Wetherall was a young woman of porcelain beauty with a lovely wildflower face. Now she was apparently exiled in one of the most forlorn corners of the world, a spot so remote and primitive that its inhabitants still believed in Black Magic—and according to those inhabitants Alice Wetherall was bewitched, bespelled, afflicted,—indeed (they said, crossing themselves) no longer a woman at all. So when Professor Langley proposed to visit the Wetheralls in their grim mountain-side retreat, he was warned, in the names of all the Evil Ones, "Do not go to that house—if you value your soul!"

An irresistible opening—to perhaps the queerest case that Lord Peter Wimsey ever investigated; but then, as Lord Peter himself said, "I am always interested in queer things."

THE POWER OF DARKNESS

by DOROTHY L. SAYERS

"THAT HOUSE, SEÑOR?" SAID THE landlord of the little *posada*. "That is the house of the American physician, whose wife, may the blessed saints preserve us, is bewitched." He crossed himself, and so did his wife and daughter.

"Bewitched, is she?" said Langley sympathetically. He was a professor of ethnology, and this was not his first visit to the Pyrenees. He had, however, never before penetrated to any place quite so remote as this tiny hamlet, clinging, like a rock-plant, high up the scarred granite shoulders of the mountain. He scented material here for his book on Basque folklore. With tact, he might persuade the old man to tell his story.

"And in what manner," he asked, "is the lady bespelled?"

"Who knows?" replied the landlord, shrugging. " 'The man that asked questions on Friday was buried on Saturday.' Will your Honor consent to take his supper?"

Langley took the hint. To press the question would be to encounter obstinate silence. Later, when they knew him better, perhaps—

His dinner was served to him at the family table—the oily, pepper-flavored stew to which he was so

Copyright 1933 by Dorothy L. Sayers; renewed; originally titled "The Incredible Elopement of Lord Peter Wimsey."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

well accustomed, and the harsh red wine of the country. His hosts chattered to him freely enough in that strange Basque language which has no fellow in the world, and is said by some to be the very speech of our first fathers in Paradise.

They spoke of the bad winter, and young Esteban Arramandy, so strong and swift at the pelota, who had been lamed by a falling rock and now limped on two sticks; of three valuable goats carried off by a bear; of the torrential rains that, after a dry summer, had scoured the bare ribs of the mountains.

It was raining now, and the wind was howling unpleasantly. This did not trouble Langley; he knew and loved this haunted and impenetrable country at all times and seasons.

Sitting in that rude peasant inn, he thought of the oak-paneled hall of his Cambridge college and smiled, and his eyes gleamed happily behind his scholarly pince-nez. He was a young man, in spite of his professorship and the string of letters after his name. To his university colleagues it seemed strange that this man, so trim, so prim, so early old, should spend his vacations eating garlic, and scrambling on muleback along precipitous mountain tracks. You would never think it, they said, to look at him.

There was a knock at the door.

"That is Martha," said the wife.

She drew back the latch, letting in a rush of wind and rain which made the candle gutter. A small, aged woman was blown in out of the night, her gray hair straggling in wisps from beneath her shawl.

"Come in, Martha, and rest yourself. It is a bad night. The parcel is ready—oh, yes. Dominique brought it from the town this morning. You must take a cup wine or milk before you go back."

The old woman thanked her and sat down, panting.

"And how goes all at the house? The doctor is well?"

"He is well."

"And *she?*"

The daughter put the question in a whisper, and the landlord shook his head at her with a frown.

"As always at this time of the year. It is but a month now to the Day of the Dead. Jesu-Maria! It is a grievous affliction for the poor gentleman, but he is patient, patient."

"He is a good man," said Dominique, "and a skillful doctor, but an evil like that is beyond his power to cure. You are not afraid, Martha?"

"Why should I be afraid? The Evil One cannot harm *me*. I have no beauty, no wits, no strength for him to envy. And the Holy Relic will protect me."

Her wrinkled fingers touched something in the bosom of her dress.

"You come from the house yonder?" asked Langley.

She eyed him suspiciously. "The señor is not of our country?"

"The gentleman is a guest, Martha," said the landlord hur-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

riedly. "A learned English gentleman. He knows our country and speaks our language as you hear. He is a great traveler, like the American doctor, your master."

"What is your master's name?" asked Langley.

It occurred to him that an American doctor who had buried himself in this remote corner of Europe must have something unusual about him. Perhaps he also was an ethnologist. If so, they might find something in common.

"He is called Wetherall." She pronounced the name several times before he was sure of it.

"Wetherall? Not Standish Wetherall?"

He was filled with extraordinary excitement.

The landlord came to his assistance.

"This parcel is for him," he said. "No doubt the name will be written there."

It was a small package, neatly sealed, bearing the label of a firm of London chemists and addressed to:

Standish Wetherall, Esq., M.D.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Langley. "But this is strange. Almost a miracle. I know this man. I knew his wife, too—"

He stopped. Again the company made the sign of the cross.

"Tell me," he said in great agitation, and forgetting his caution, "you say his wife is bewitched—afflicted—how is this? Is she the same woman I know? Describe her. She was tall, beautiful, with gold hair and blue eyes like the Madonna. Is this she?"

There was a silence. The old woman shook her head and muttered something inaudible, but the daughter whispered, "True—it is true. Once we saw her thus, as the gentleman says—"

"Be quiet," said her father.

"Sir," said Martha, "we are in the hand of God."

She rose, and wrapped her shawl about her.

"One moment," said Langley. He pulled out his notebook and scribbled a few lines. "Will you take this letter to your master, the doctor? It is to say that I am here, his friend whom he once knew, and to ask if I may come and visit him. That is all."

"You would not go to that house, excellence?" whispered the old man fearfully.

"If he will not have me, maybe he will come to me here." He added a word or two and drew a piece of money from his pocket. "You will carry my note for me?"

"Willingly, willingly. But the señor will be careful? Perhaps, though a foreigner, you are of the Faith?"

"I am a Christian," said Langley.

This seemed to satisfy her. She took the letter and the money, and secured them, together with the parcel, in a remote pocket. Then she walked to the door, strongly and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rapidly for all her bent shoulders and appearance of great age.

Langley remained lost in thought. Nothing could have astonished him more than to come upon the name of Standish Wetherall in this place. He had thought that episode finished and done with over three years ago. Of all people! The brilliant surgeon in the prime of his life and reputation, and Alice Wetherall, that delicate piece of golden womanhood—exiled in this forlorn corner of the world!

His heart beat a little faster at the thought of seeing her again. Three years ago he had decided that it would be wiser if he did not see too much of that porcelain loveliness. That folly was past now—but still he could not visualize her except against the background of the great white house with the peacocks and the swimming pool and the gilded tower with the roof garden. Wetherall was a rich man, the son of old Hiram Wetherall the automobile magnate. What was Wetherall doing here?

He tried to remember. Hiram Wetherall, he knew, was dead, and all the money now belonged to Standish, for there were no other children. There had been trouble when the only son had married a girl without parents or history. He had brought her from "somewhere out west."

There had been some story of his having found her, years before, as a neglected orphan, and saved her from something or cured her of something and paid for her education, when he was still scarcely more than a student. Then, when he was a man over forty and she a girl of seventeen, he had brought her home and married her.

And now he had left his house and his money and one of the finest specialist practices in New York to come to live in the Basque country—in a spot so out of the way that men still believed in Black Magic, and could barely splutter more than a few words of bastard French or Spanish—a spot that was uncivilized even by comparison with the primitive civilization surrounding it.

Langley began to be sorry that he had written to Wetherall. It might be resented.

The landlord and his wife had gone out to see to their cattle. The daughter sat close to the fire, mending a garment. She did not look at him, but he had the feeling that she would be glad to speak.

"Tell me, child," he said gently, "what is the trouble which afflicts these people who may be friends of mine?"

"Oh!" She glanced up quickly and leaned across to him, her arms stretched out over the sewing in her lap. "Sir, be advised. Do not go there. No one will stay in that house at this time of the year, except Tomaso, who has not all his wits, and old Martha, who is—"

"What?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"A saint—or something else," she said hurriedly.

"Child," said Langley again, "this lady when I knew her—"

"I will tell you," she said, "but my father must not know. The good doctor brought her here three years ago last June, and then she was as you say. She was beautiful. She laughed and talked in her own speech—for she knew no Spanish or Basque. But on the Night of the Dead—"

She crossed herself.

"All-Hallows Eve," said Langley.

"Indeed, I do not know what happened. But she fell into the power of the darkness. She changed. There were terrible cries—I cannot tell. But little by little she became what she is now. Nobody sees her but Martha and she will not talk. But the people say it is not a woman at all that lives there now."

"Mad?" said Langley.

"It is not madness. It is—enchantment. Listen. Two years since on Easter Day—is that my father?"

"No, no."

"The sun had shone and the wind came up from the valley. We heard the blessed church bells all day long. That night there came a knock at the door. My father opened and one stood there like Our Blessed Lady herself, very pale like the image in the church and with a blue cloak over her head.

"She spoke, but we could not tell what she said. She wept and wrung her hands and pointed down the valley path, and my father went to the stable and saddled the mule. I thought of the flight from bad King Herod. But then—the American doctor came. He had run fast and was out of breath. And she shrieked at sight of him."

A great wave of indignation swept over Langley. If the man was brutal to his wife, something must be done quickly. The girl hurried on.

"He said—Jesu-Maria—he said that his wife was bewitched. At Easter-tide the power of the Evil One was broken and she would try to flee. But as soon as the Holy Season was over, the spell would fall on her again, and therefore it was not safe to let her go.

"My parents were afraid to have touched the evil thing. They brought out the Holy Water and sprinkled the mule, but the wickedness had entered into the poor beast and she kicked my father so that he was lame for a month. The American took his wife away with him and we never saw her again. Even old Martha does not always see her.

"But every year the power waxes and wanes—heaviest at Hallowtide and lifted again at Easter. Do not go to that house, señor, if you value your soul! Hush, they are coming back."

Langley would have liked to ask more, but his host glanced quickly and suspiciously at the girl. Taking up his candle, Langeley went to bed. He dreamed of wolves, long, lean,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and black, running on the scent of blood . . .

The next day brought an answer to his letter:

"DEAR LANGLEY,—Yes, this is myself, and of course I remember you well. Only too delighted to have you come and cheer our exile. You will find Alice somewhat changed, I fear, but I will explain our misfortunes when we meet. Our household is limited, owing to some kind of superstitious avoidance of the afflicted, but if you will come along about half-past seven, we can give you a meal of sorts. Martha will show you the way.

"Cordially,
STANDISH WETHERALL"

The doctor's house was small and old, stuck half way up the mountainside on a kind of ledge in the rock-wall. A stream, unseen but clamorous, fell echoing down close at hand.

Langley followed his guide into a dim, square room with a great hearth at one end and, drawn close before the fire, an armchair with wide, sheltering ears. Martha, muttering some sort of apology, hobbled away and left him standing there in half light. The flames of the wood fire, leaping and falling, made here a gleam and there a gleam, and, as his eyes grew familiar with the room, he saw that in the center was a table laid for a meal, and that there were pictures on the walls. One of these struck a familiar note. He went close to it and recognized a portrait of Alice Wetherall that he had last seen in New York. It was painted by Sargent in his happiest mood, and the lovely wildflower face seemed to lean down to him with the sparkling smile of life.

A log suddenly broke and fell in the hearth, flaring. As though the little noise and light had disturbed something, he heard, or thought he heard, a movement from the big chair before the fire. He stepped forward, and then stopped.

There was nothing to be seen, but a noise had begun—a kind of low animal muttering, extremely disagreeable to listen to. It was not made by a dog or a cat, he felt sure. It was a sucking, slobbering sound that affected him in a curiously sickening way. It ended in a series of little grunts or squeals, and then there was silence.

Langley stepped backward toward the door. He was positive that something was in the room with him that he did not care to meet. An absurd impulse seized him to run away. He was prevented by the arrival of Martha, carrying a big, old-fashioned lamp, and behind her, Wetherall, who greeted him cheerfully.

The familiar American accent dispelled the atmosphere of discomfort that had been gathering about Langley. He held out a cordial hand.

"Fancy meeting *you* here," said he.

"The world is very small," replied Wetherall. "I am afraid that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is a hardy bromide, but I certainly am pleased to see you," he added, with some emphasis.

The old woman had put the lamp on the table, and now asked if she should bring in the dinner. Wetherall replied in the affirmative, using a mixture of Spanish and Basque which she seemed to understand well enough.

"I didn't know you were a Basque scholar," said Langley.

"Oh, one picks it up. These people speak nothing else. But of course Basque is your speciality, isn't it?"

"Oh, yes."

"I imagine they have told you some queer things about us. But we'll go into that later. I've managed to make the place reasonably comfortable, though I could do with a few more modern conveniences. However, it suits us."

Langley took the opportunity to mumble some sort of inquiry about Mrs. Wetherall.

"Alice? Ah, yes, I forgot—you have not seen her yet." Wetherall looked hard at him with a kind of half smile. "I should have warned you. You were —rather an admirer of my wife in the old days."

"Like everyone else," said Langley.

"No doubt. Nothing specially surprising about it, was there? Here comes dinner. Put it down, Martha, and we will ring when we are ready."

The old woman set a dish on the table, which was handsomely furnished with glass and silver, and went out. Wetherall moved over to the fireplace, stepping sideways and keeping his eyes oddly fixed on Langley. Then he addressed the armchair.

"Alice! Get up, my dear, and welcome an old admirer of yours. Come along. You will both enjoy it. Get up."

Something shuffled and whimpered among the cushions. Wetherall stooped, with an air of almost exaggerated courtesy, and lifted it to its feet. A moment, and it faced Langley in the lamplight.

It was dressed in a rich gown of gold satin and lace, that hung rucked and crumpled on the thick and slouching body. The face was white and puffy, the eyes vacant, the mouth drooled open, with little trickles of saliva running from the loose corners. A dry fringe of rusty hair clung to the half-bald scalp, like the dead wisps on the head of a mummy.

"Come, my love," said Wetherall. "Say how do you do to Mr. Langley."

The creature blinked and mouthed out some inhuman sounds. Wetherall put his hand under its forearm, and it slowly extended a lifeless paw.

"There, she recognizes you all right. I thought she would. Shake hands with him, my dear."

With a sensation of nausea, Langley took the inert hand. It was clammy and coarse to the touch and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

made no attempt to return his pressure. He let it go; it pawed vaguely in the air for a moment and then dropped.

"I was afraid you might be upset," said Wetherall, watching him. "I have grown used to it, of course, and it doesn't affect me as it would an outsider. Not that you are an outsider—anything but that—eh? Premature senility is the name for it, I suppose. Shocking, of course, if you haven't met it before. You needn't mind, by the way, what you say. She understands nothing."

"How did it happen?"

"I don't quite know. Came on gradually. I took the best advice, naturally, but there was nothing to be done. So we came here. I didn't care about facing things at home where everybody knew us. And I didn't like the idea of a sanitarium. Alice is my wife, you know—sickness or health, for better, for worse, and all that. Come along; dinner's getting cold."

He advanced to the table, leading his wife, whose dim eyes seemed to brighten a little at the sight of food.

"Sit down, my dear, and eat your nice dinner—she understands that, you see. You'll excuse her table manners, won't you? They're not pretty, but you'll get used to them."

He tied a napkin round the neck of the creature and placed food before her in a deep bowl. She snatched at it hungrily, slavering and gobbling as she scooped it up in her fingers and smeared face and hands with the gravy.

Wetherall drew out a chair for his guest opposite to where his wife sat. The sight of her held Langley with a kind of disgusted fascination.

The food—a sort of salmis—was deliciously cooked, but Langley had no appetite. The whole thing was an outrage, to the pitiful woman and to himself. Her seat was directly beneath the Sargent portrait, and his eyes went helplessly from the one to the other.

"Yes," said Wetherall, following his glance. "There is a difference, isn't there?" He himself was eating heartily and apparently enjoying his dinner. "Nature plays sad tricks on us."

"Is it always like this?"

"No; this is one of her bad days. At times she will be—almost human. Of course these people here don't know what to think of it all. They have their own explanation of a very simple medical phenomenon."

"Is there any hope of recovery?"

"I'm afraid not—not of a permanent cure. You are not eating anything."

"I—well, Wetherall, this has been a shock to me."

"Of course. Try a glass of burgundy. I ought not to have asked you to come, but the idea of talking to an educated fellow-creature once again tempted me, I must confess."

"It must be terrible for you."

"I have become resigned. Ah, naughty, naughty!" The idiot had

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

flung half the contents of her bowl on the table. Wetherall patiently remedied the disaster, and went on, "I can bear it better here, in this wild place where everything seems possible and nothing unnatural. My people are all dead, so there was nothing to prevent me from doing as I liked about it."

"No. What about your property in the States?"

"Oh, I run over from time to time to keep an eye on things. In fact, I am due to go next month. I'm glad you caught me. Nobody over there knows about us, of course. They just think we're living in Europe."

"Did you consult no American doctor?"

"No. We were in Paris when the first symptoms showed themselves. That was shortly after that visit you paid to us." A flash of some emotion to which Langley could not put a name made the doctor's eyes for a moment sinister. "The best men on this side confirmed my own diagnosis. So we came here."

He rang for Martha, who removed the salmis and put on a kind of sweet pudding.

"Martha is my right hand," observed Wetherall. "I don't know what we should do without her. When I am away, she looks after Alice like a mother. Not that there's much one can do for her, except to keep her fed and warm and clean—and the last is something of a task."

There was a note in his voice which jarred on Langley. Wetherall noticed his recoil and said, "I won't disguise from you that it gets on my nerves sometimes. But it can't be helped. Tell me about yourself. What have you been doing lately?"

Langley replied with as much vivacity as he could assume, and they talked of indifferent subjects till the deplorable being which had once been Alice Wetherall began to mumble and whine fretfully and scramble down from her chair.

"She's cold," said Wetherall. "Go back to the fire, my dear."

He propelled her briskly toward the hearth, and she sank back into the armchair, crouching and complaining and thrusting out her hands toward the blaze. Wetherall brought out brandy and a box of cigars.

"I contrive to keep in touch with the world, you see," he said. "They send me these from London. And I get the latest medical journals and reports. I'm writing a book, you know, on my own subject; so I don't vegetate. I can experiment, too—plenty of room for a laboratory, and no Vivisection Acts to bother one. It's a good country to work in. Are you staying here long?"

"No, not very long."

"If you had thought of staying on, I would have offered you the use of this house while I was away. You would find it more comfortable than the *posada*, and I should have no qualms, you know, about leaving you alone in the place with my

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wife—under the peculiar circumstances."

He stressed the last words and laughed. Langley hardly knew what to say.

"Really, Wetherall—"

"Though, in the old days, *you* might have liked the prospect more and *I* might have liked it less. There was a time, I think, Langley, when you would have jumped at the idea of living alone with—*my wife.*"

Langley jumped up. "What the devil are you insinuating, Wetherall?"

"Nothing, nothing. I was just thinking of the afternoon when you and she wandered away at a picnic and got lost. You remember? Yes, I thought you would."

"This is monstrous," retorted Langley. "How dare you say such things—with that poor soul sitting there—"

"Yes, poor soul. You're a poor thing to look at now, aren't you, my kitten?"

He turned suddenly to the woman. Something in his abrupt gesture seemed to frighten her, and she shrank away from him.

"You devil!" cried Langley. "She's afraid of you. What have you been doing to her? How did she get into this state? I *will* know!"

"Gently," said Wetherall. "I can allow for your natural agitation at finding her like this, but I can't have you coming between me and *my wife.* What a faithful fellow you are, Langley. I believe you still want her—just as you did before when you thought I was dumb and blind. Come now, have you got designs on *my wife*, Langley? Would you like to kiss her, caress her—my beautiful wife?"

A scarlet fury blinded Langley. He dashed an inexpert fist at the mocking face. Wetherall gripped his arm, but he broke away. Panic seized him. He fled stumbling against the furniture and rushed out. As he went he heard Wetherall very softly laughing . . .

The train to Paris was crowded. Langley, scrambling in at the last moment, found himself condemned to the corridor. He sat down on a suitcase and tried to think. He had not been able to collect his thoughts on his wild flight. Even now, he was not quite sure what he had fled from. He buried his head in his hands.

"Excuse me," said a polite voice.

Langley looked up. A fair man in a gray suit was looking down at him through a monocle.

"Fearfully sorry to disturb you," went on the fair man. "I'm just tryin' to barge back to my jolly old kennel. Ghastly crowd, isn't it? Don't know when I've disliked my fellow creatures more. I say, you don't look frightfully fit. Wouldn't you be better sitting on something more comfortable?"

Langley explained that he had not been able to get a seat. The fair man eyed his haggard and unshaven countenance for a moment and then

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

said, "Well, look here, why not come and lie down in my bin for a bit? Have you had any grub? No? That's a mistake. Toddle along with me and we'll get hold of a spot of soup and so on. You'll excuse my mentioning it, but you look as if you'd been backing a system that's come unstuck, or something. Not my business, of course, but do have something to eat."

Langley was too faint and sick to protest. He stumbled obediently along the corridor till he was pushed into a first-class sleeper, where a rigidly correct manservant was laying out a pair of mauve silk pajamas and a set of silver-mounted brushes.

"This gentleman's feeling rotten, Bunter," said the man with the monocle, "so I've brought him in to rest his aching head upon thy breast. Get hold of the commissariat and tell 'em to buzz a plate of soup along and a bottle of something drinkable."

"Very good, my lord."

Langley dropped, exhausted, on the bed, but when the food appeared he ate and drank greedily. He could not remember when he had last had a meal.

"I say," he said, "I needed that. It's awfully decent of you. I'm sorry to appear so stupid. I've had a bit of a shock."

"Tell me all," said the stranger pleasantly.

The man did not look particularly intelligent, but he seemed friendly, and above all, normal. Langley wondered how the story would sound.

"I'm an absolute stranger to you," he began.

"And I to you," said the fair man. "The chief use of strangers is to tell things to. Don't you agree?"

"I'd like—" said Langley. "The fact is, I've run away from something. It's queer—it's—but what's the use of bothering you with it?"

The fair man sat down beside him and laid a slim hand on his arm.

"Just a moment," he said. "Don't tell me anything if you'd rather not. But my name is Wimsey—Lord Peter Wimsey—and I am interested in queer things."

It was the middle of November when the stranger came to the village. Thin, pale, and silent, with his great black hood flapping about his face, he was surrounded with an atmosphere of mystery from the start. He settled down, not at the inn, but in a dilapidated cottage high up in the mountains, and he brought with him five mule loads of mysterious baggage and a servant.

The servant was almost as uncanny as the master; he was a Spaniard and spoke Basque well enough to act as an interpreter for his employer when necessary; but his words were few, his aspect gloomy and stern, and such brief information as he vouchsafed, disquieting in the extreme.

His master, he said, was a wise man; he spent all his time reading

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

books; he ate no flesh; he was of no known country; he spoke the language of the Apostles and had talked with blessed Lazarus after his return from the grave; and when he sat alone in his chamber by night, the angels of God came and conversed with him in celestial harmonies.

This was terrifying news. The few dozen villagers avoided the little cottage, especially at night-time; and when the pale stranger was seen coming down the mountain path, folded in his black robe and bearing one of his magic tomes beneath his arm, the women pushed their children within doors, and made the sign of the cross.

Nevertheless, it was a child that first made the personal acquaintance of the magician. The small son of the Widow Etcheverry, a child of bold and inquisitive disposition, went one evening adventuring into the unhallowed neighborhood. He was missing for hours, during which his mother, in a frenzy of anxiety, had called the neighbors and summoned the priest, who had unhappily been called away on business to the town. Suddenly, however, the child reappeared, well and cheerful, with a strange story to tell.

He had crept up close to the magician's house (the bold wicked child, did ever you hear the like?) and climbed into a tree to spy on the stranger (Jesu-Maria!). And he saw a light in the window, and strange shapes moving about and shadows going to and fro within the room. And then there had come a strain of music so ravishing it had drawn the very heart out of his body, as though all the stars were singing together. (Oh, my precious treasure! The wizard has stolen the heart out of him, alas! alas!)

Then the cottage door opened and the wizard came out and with him a great company of familiar spirits. One of them had wings like a seraph and talked in an unknown tongue, and another was like a wee man, no higher than your knee, with a black face and a white beard, and he sat on the wizard's shoulder and whispered in his ear. And the heavenly music played louder and louder. And the wizard had a pale flame all about his head, like the pictures of the saints. (Blessed St. James of Compostella, be merciful to us all! And what then?)

Why, then he, the boy, had been very much frightened and wished he had not come, but the little dwarf spirit had seen him and jumped into the tree after him, climbing—oh, so fast! And he had tried to climb higher and had slipped and fallen to the ground. (Oh, the poor, wicked, brave, bad boy!)

Then the wizard had picked him up and spoken strange words to him and all the pain had gone away from the places where he had bumped himself (Marvelous! marvelous!), and he had carried him into the house. And inside, it was like the streets of Heaven, all gold and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

glittering. And the familiar spirits had sat beside the fire, nine in number, and the music had stopped playing.

But the wizard's servant had brought him marvelous fruits in a silver dish, like fruits of Paradise, very sweet and delicious, and he had eaten them, and drunk a strange rich drink from a goblet covered with red and blue jewels. Oh, yes—and there had been a tall crucifix on the wall, big, big, with a lamp burning before it and a strange sweet perfume like the smell in church on Easter Day.

(A crucifix? That was strange. Perhaps the magician was not so wicked after all. And what next?)

Next, the wizard's servant had told him not to be afraid, and had asked his name and his age and whether he could repeat his Paternoster. So he had said that prayer and the Ave Maria and part of the Credo, but the Credo was long and he had forgotten what came after "*ascendit in cœlum.*"

So the wizard had prompted him and they had finished saying it together. And the wizard had pronounced the sacred names and words without flinching and in the right order, so far as the boy could tell. And then the servant had asked further about himself and his family, and he had told about the death of the black goat and about his sister's lover, who had left her because she had not so much money as the merchant's daughter.

Then the wizard and his servant had spoken together and laughed, and the servant had said, "My master gives this message to your sister: that where there is no love there is no wealth, but he that is bold shall have gold for the asking."

And with that the wizard had put forth his hand into the air and taken from it—out of the empty air, yes, truly—one, two, three, four, five pieces of money and given them to him. And he was afraid to take them till he had made the sign of the cross upon them, and then, as they did not vanish or turn into fiery serpents, he had taken them, and here they were!

So the five gold pieces were examined and admired in fear and trembling, and then by grandfather's advice, placed under the feet of the image of Our Lady, after a sprinkling with Holy Water for their better purification. And on the next morning, as they were still there, they were shown to the priest, who arrived, tardy and flustered, and by him pronounced to be good Spanish coin, whereof one piece being devoted to the Church to put all right with Heaven, the rest might be put to secular uses without peril to the soul. After which, the good padre made his hasty way to the cottage, and returned, after an hour, filled with good reports of the wizard.

"For, my children," said he, "this is no evil sorcerer, but a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Christian man, speaking the language of the Faith. He and I have conversed together with edification. Moreover, he keeps very good wine and is altogether a very worthy person. Nor did I perceive any familiar spirits or flaming apparitions; but it is true that there is a crufix and also a very handsome Testament with pictures in gold and color. *Benedicite*, my children. This is a good and learned man."

And away he went back to his presbytery; and that winter the chapel of Our Lady had a new altar cloth.

After that, each night saw a little group of people clustered at a safe distance to hear the music which poured from the wizard's windows, and from time to time a few bold spirits would creep up close enough to peer through the chinks of the shutters and glimpse the marvels within.

The wizard had been in residence about a month, and sat one night after his evening meal in conversation with his servant. The black hood was pushed back from his head, disclosing a sleek poll of fair hair, and a pair of rather humorous gray eyes, with a cynical droop of the lids. A glass of Cockburn 1908 stood on the table at his elbow and from the arm of his chair a red-and-green parrot gazed unwinkingly at the fire.

"Time is getting on, Juan," said the magician. "This business is very good fun and all that—but is there anything doing with the old lady?"

"I think so, my lord. I have dropped a word here and there of marvelous cures and miracles. I think she will come. Perhaps even tonight."

"Thank goodness! I want to get the thing over before Wetherall comes back, or we may find ourselves in Queer Street. It will take some weeks, you know, before we are ready to move, even if the scheme works at all. Damn it, what's that?"

Juan rose and went into the inner room, to return in a minute carrying the lemur. "Micky has been playing with your hair brushes," he said indulgently. "Naughty one, be quiet! Are you ready for a little practice, my lord?"

"Oh, rather, yes! I'm getting to be quite a dab at this job. If all else fails, I shall try for an engagement with Houdini."

Juan laughed, showing his white teeth. He brought out a set of billiard balls, coins, and other conjuring apparatus, palming and multiplying them negligently as he went. The other took them from him, and the lesson proceeded.

"Hush!" said the wizard, retrieving a ball which had tiresomely slipped from his fingers in the very act of vanishing. "There's somebody coming up the path."

He pulled his robe about his face and slipped silently into the inner room. Juan grinned, removed the decanter and glasses, and extinguished the lamp. In the firelight the great eyes of the lemur gleamed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

strongly as it hung on the back of the high chair.

Juan pulled a folio from the shelf, lit a scented pastille in a curiously shaped copper vase, and pulled forward a heavy iron caldron which stood on the hearth. As he piled the logs about it, there came a knock. He opened the door, the lemur running at his heels.

"Whom do you seek, mother?" he asked, in Basque.

"Is the Wise One at home?"

"His body is at home, mother; his spirit holds converse with the unseen. Enter. What would you with us?"

"I have come, as I said—ah, Mary! Is that a spirit?"

"God made spirits and bodies also. Enter and fear not."

The old woman came tremblingly forward. "Hast thou spoken with him of what I told thee?"

"I have. I have shown him the sickness of thy mistress—her husband's sufferings—all."

"What said he?"

"Nothing; he read in his book."

"Think you he can heal her?"

"I do not know. The enchantment is a strong one, but my master is mighty for good."

"Will he see me?"

"I will ask him. Remain here, and show no fear, whatever befall."

"I will be courageous," said the old woman, fingering her beads.

Juan withdrew. There was a nerve-shattering interval. The lemur had climed up to the back of the chair again and swung, teeth-chattering, among the leaping shadows. The parrot cocked its head and spoke a few gruff words from his corner. An aromatic steam began to rise from the caldron.

Then, slowly into the red light, three, four, seven white shapes came stealthily and sat down in a circle about the hearth. Then a faint music, that seemed to roll in from leagues away. The flame flickered and dropped. There was a tall cabinet against the wall, with gold figures on it that seemed to move with the moving firelight.

Then, out of the darkness, a strange voice chanted in an unearthily tongue that sobbed and thundered.

Martha's knees gave under her. She sank down. The seven white cats rose and stretched themselves, and came sidling slowly about her. She looked up and saw the wizard standing before her, a book in one hand and a silver wand in the other. The upper part of his face was hidden, but she saw his pale lips move and presently he spoke, in a deep, husky tone that vibrated solemnly in the dim room:

"ὦ πέπον, ἐι μὲν γὰρ, πόλεμον περὶ τόνδε φυγόντε,
αἰεὶ δὴ μέλλοιμεν ἀγήρω τ' ἀθανάτω τε
ἔσσεθ', οὔτε κεν αὐτὸς ἐνὶ πρώτοισι μαχοίμην,
οὔτε κέ σε στέλλοιμι μάχην ἐς κυδιάνειραν . . ."

The great syllables went rolling

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on. Then the wizard paused, and added, in a kinder tone, "Great stuff, this Homer. 'It goes so thunderingly as though it conjured devils.' What do I do next?"

The servant had come back, and now whispered in Martha's ear.

"Speak now," said he. "The master is willing to help you."

Thus encouraged, Martha stammered out her request. She had come to ask the Wise Man to help her mistress, who lay under an enchantment. She had brought an offering—the best she could find, for she had not liked to take anything of her master's during his absence. But here were a silver penny, an oatcake, and a bottle of wine, very much at the wizard's service, if such small matters could please him.

The wizard, setting aside his book, gravely accepted the silver penny, turned it magically into six gold pieces, and laid the offering on the table. Over the oatcake and the wine he showed a little hesitation, but at length, murmuring, "*Ergo omnis longo solvit se Teucria luctu*" (a line notorious for its grave spondaic cadence), he metamorphosed the one into a pair of pigeons and the other into a curious little crystal tree in a metal pot, and set them beside the coins.

Martha's eyes nearly started from her head, but Juan whispered encouragingly, "The good intention gives value to the gift. The master is pleased. Hush!"

The music ceased on a loud chord. The wizard, speaking now with greater assurance, delivered himself with fair accuracy of a page or so from Homer's Catalogue of the Ships, and, drawing from the folds of his robe his long white hand laden with antique rings, produced from mid-air a small casket of shining metal, which he proffered to the suppliant.

"The master says," prompted the servant, "that you shall take this casket and give to your lady of the wafers which it contains, one at every meal. When all have been consumed, seek this place again. And remember to say three Aves and two Paters morning and evening for the intention of the lady's health. Thus, by faith and diligence, the cure may be accomplished."

Martha received the casket with trembling hands.

"*Tendebantque manus ripæ ulterioris amore*," said the wizard with emphasis. "*Poluphloisboio thalasses. Ne plus ultra. Valete. Plaudite.*"

He stalked away into the darkness, and the audience was over.

"It is working, then?" said the wizard to Juan.

The time was five weeks later, and five more consignments of enchanted wafers had been ceremoniously dispatched to the grim house on the mountain.

"It is working," agreed Juan. "The intelligence is returning, the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

body is becoming livelier and the hair is growing again."

"Thank the Lord! It was a shot in the dark, Juan, and even now I can hardly believe that anyone in the world could think of such a diabolical trick. When does Wetherall return?"

"In three weeks' time."

"Then we had better fix our grand finale for today fortnight. See that the mules are ready, and go down to the town and get a message off to the yacht."

"Yes, my lord."

"That will give you a week to get clear with the menagerie and the baggage. And—I say, how about Martha? Is it dangerous to leave her behind, do you think?"

"I will try to persuade her to come back with us."

"Do. I should hate anything unpleasant to happen to her. The man's a criminal lunatic. Oh, lord! I'll be glad when this is over. I want to get into a proper suit of clothes again. What Bunter would say if he saw this—"

The wizard laughed, lit a cigar, and turned on the old fashioned gramophone . . .

The last act was duly staged a fortnight later.

It had taken some trouble to persuade Martha of the necessity of bringing her mistress to the wizard's house. Indeed, that supernatural personage had been obliged to make an alarming display of wrath and to declaim two whole choruses from Euripides before gaining his point.

The final touch was put to the terrors of the evening by a demonstration of the ghastly effects of a sodium flame—which lends a very corpse-like aspect to the human countenance, particularly in a lonely cottage on a dark night, and accompanied by incantations and the *Danse Macabre* of Saint-Saens.

Eventually the wizard was placated by a promise, and Martha departed, bearing with her a charm, engrossed on parchment, which her mistress was to read and thereafter hang about her neck in a white bag.

Considered as a magical formula, the document was perhaps a little unimpressive in its language, but its meaning was such that a child could understand. It was in English, and ran:

> "You have been ill and in trouble, but your friends are ready to cure you and help you. Don't be afraid, but do whatever Martha tells you, and you will soon be quite well and happy again."

"And even if she can't understand it," said the wizard to his man, "it can't possibly do any harm."

The events of that terrible night have become legend in the village. They tell by the fireside with bated breath how Martha brought the strange, foreign lady to the wizard's house, that she might be finally and forever freed from the power of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Evil One. It was a dark and stormy night with the wind howling terribly through the mountains.

The lady had become much better and brighter through the wizard's magic—though this, perhaps, was only a fresh glamor and delusion—and she had followed Martha like a little child on that strange and secret journey. They had crept out very quietly to elude the vigilance of old Tomaso, who had strict orders from the doctor never to let the lady stir one step from the house. As for that, Tomaso swore that he had been cast into an enchanted sleep—but who knows? There may have been no more to it than too much wine. Martha was a cunning woman, and, some said, little better than a witch herself.

Be that as it might, Martha and the lady had come to the cottage, and there the wizard had spoken many things in a strange tongue, and the lady had spoken likewise. Yes—she who for so long had only grunted like a beast, had talked with the wizard and answered him.

Then the wizard had drawn strange signs on the floor round about the lady and himself. And when the lamp was extinguished, the signs glowed awfully, with a pale light of their own. The wizard also drew a circle about Martha herself, and warned her to keep inside it.

Presently they heard a rushing noise, like great wings beating, and all the familiars leaped about, and the little white man with the black face ran up the curtain and swung from the pole. Then a voice cried out, "He comes! He comes!" and the wizard opened the door of the tall cabinet with gold images on it, that stood in the center of the circle, and he and the lady stepped inside it and shut the doors after them.

The rushing sound grew louder and the familiar spirits screamed and chattered—and then, all of a sudden, there was a thunder clap and a great flash of light and the cabinet was shivered into pieces and fell down. And lo and behold, the wizard and the lady had vanished clean away and were never more seen or heard of.

This was Martha's story, told the next day to her neighbors. How she had escaped from the terrible house she could not remember. But when, sometime later, a group of villagers summoned up courage to visit the place again, they found it bare and empty. Lady, wizard, servant, familiars, furniture, bags and baggage—all were gone, leaving not a trace behind them, except a few mysterious lines and figures traced on the floor of the cottage.

This was a wonder indeed. More awful still was the disappearance of Martha herself, which took place three nights afterward.

The next day the American doctor returned—to find an empty hearth and a legend.

"Yacht ahoy!"

Langley peered anxiously over

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the rail of the *Abracadabra* as the boat loomed out of the blackness. When the first passenger came aboard, he ran hastily to greet him.

"Is it all right, Wimsey?"

"Absolutely all right. She's a bit bewildered, of course—but you needn't be afraid. She's like a child, but she's getting better every day. Bear up, old man—there's nothing to shock you about her."

Langley moved hestatingly as a muffled female figure was hoisted gently on board.

"Speak to her," said Wimsey. "She may or may not recognize you. I can't say."

Langley summoned up his courage. "Good evening, Mrs. Wetherall," he said, and held out his hand.

The woman pushed the cloak from her face. Her blue eyes gazed shyly at him in the lamplight—then a smile broke out upon her lips.

"Why, I know you—of course I know you. You're Mr. Langley. I'm so glad to see you."

She clasped his hand in hers.

"Well, Langley," said Lord Peter, as he manipulated the syphon, "a more abominable crime it has never been my fortune to discover. My religious beliefs are a little ill-defined, but I hope something really beastly happens to Wetherall in the next world. Say when!

"You know, there were one or two very queer points about that story you told me. They gave me a line on the thing from the start.

"To begin with, there was this extraordinary kind of decay or imbecility settlin' in on a girl in her twenties—so conveniently, too, just after you'd been hangin' round the Wetherall home and showin' perhaps a trifle too much sensibility, don't you see?

"And then there was this tale of the conditions clearin' up regularly once a year or so—not like any ordinary brain trouble. Looked as if it was being controlled by somebody.

"Then there was the fact that Mrs. Wetherall had been under her husband's medical eye from the beginning, with no family or friends who knew anything about her to keep a check on the fellow. Then there was the determined isolation of her in a place where no doctor could see her and where, even if she had a lucid interval, there wasn't a soul who could understand or be understood by her.

"Queer, too, that it should be a part of the world where you, with your interests, might reasonably be expected to turn up some day and be treated to a sight of what she had turned into. Then there were Wetherall's well-known researches, and the fact that he kept in touch with a chemist in London.

"All that gave me a theory, but I had to test it before I could be sure I was right. Wetherall was going to America, and that gave me a chance; but of course he left strict orders that nobody should get into or out

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of his house during his absence. I had, somehow, to establish an authority much greater than his over old Martha, who is a faithful soul, God bless her!

"Hence, exit Lord Peter Wimsey and enter the magician. The treatment was tried and proved successful—hence the elopement and the rescue.

"Well, now, listen—and don't go off the deep end. It's all over now. Alice Wetherall is one of those unfortunate people who suffer from congenital thyroid deficiency. You know the thyroid gland in your throat—the one that stokes the engine and keeps the old brain going.

"In some people the thing doesn't work properly, and they turn out cretinous imbeciles. Their bodies don't grow and their minds don't work. But feed 'em the stuff, and they come absolutely all right—cheery and handsome and intelligent and lively as crickets. Only, don't you see, you have to *keep* feeding it to 'em, otherwise they just go back to an imbecile condition.

"Wetherall found this girl when he was a bright young student just learning about the thyroid. Twenty years ago very few experiments had been made in this kind of treatment, but he was a bit of a pioneer. He gets hold of the kid, works a miraculous cure, and, bein' naturally bucked with himself, adopts her, gets her educated, likes the look of her, and finally marries her.

"You understand, don't you, that there's nothing fundamentally unsound about those thyroid deficients. Keep 'em going on the little daily dose and they're normal in every way, fit to live and have ordinary healthy children.

"Nobody, naturally, knew anything about this thyroid business except the girl herself and her husband. All goes well till *you* come along. Then Wetherall gets jealous—"

"He had no cause."

Wimsey shrugged, "Possibly, my lad, the lady displayed a preference—we needn't go into that. Anyhow, Wetherall did get jealous and saw a perfectly marvelous revenge in his power. He carried his wife off to the Pyrenees, isolated her from all help, and then simply sat back and starved her of her thyroid extract.

"No doubt he told her what he was going to do, and why. It would please him to hear her desperate appeals—to let her feel herself slipping back day by day, hour by hour, into something less than a beast—"

"Oh, God."

"As you say. Of course, after a time, a few months, she would cease to know what was happening to her. He would still have the satisfaction of watching her—seeing her skin thicken, her body coarsen, her hair fall out, her eyes grow vacant, her brain go to mush, her habits—"

"Stop it, Wimsey!"

"Well, you saw it all yourself. But that wouldn't be enough for him.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

So, every so often he would feed her the thyroid again and bring her back sufficiently to realize her own degradation—"

"If only I had the brute here!"

"Just as well you haven't. Well then, one day—by a stroke of luck—Mr. Langley, the amorous Mr. Langley, actually turns up. What a triumph to let him see—"

Langley tried to stop Wimsey again.

"Right-ho, but it was ingenious, wasn't it? So simple. The more I think of it, the more it fascinates me. But it was just that extra refinement of cruelty that defeated him. Because, when you told me the story, I couldn't help recognizing the symptoms of thyroid deficiency, and I thought, 'Just supposing'—so I hunted up the chemist whose name you saw on the parcel, and after unwinding a lot of red tape, got him to admit that he had several times sent Wetherall consignments of thyroid extract. So then I was almost sure, don't you see?

"I got a doctor's advice and a supply of extract, hired a tame Spanish conjurer and some performing cats and things, and barged off complete with disguise and a trick cabinet devised by the ingenious Mr. Devanant. I'm a bit of a conjurer myself, and between us we didn't do so badly.

"The local superstitions helped, of course, and so did the gramophone records. Schubert's *Unfinished* is first class for producing an atmosphere of gloom and mystery, so are luminous paint and the remnants of a classical education."

"Look here, Wimsey, will she be all right again?"

"Right as ninepence, and I imagine that any American court would give her a divorce on the grounds of persistent cruelty. After that—it's up to you!"

Lord Peter's friends greeted his reappearance in London with mild surprise.

"And what have *you* been doing with yourself?" demanded the Hon. Freddy Arbuthnot.

"Eloping with another man's wife," replied his lordship. "But only," he hastened to add, "in a purely Pickwickian sense. Nothing in it for yours truly. Oh, well! Let's toddle round to the Holborn Empire, and see what George Robey can do for us."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Matt Young, discharged from the Union Army after having been wounded in action, had a dream—of Marie and a homestead of their own in Iowa. And now that dream was shattered . . .

HOSS THIEF

by RICHARD O. LEWIS

THE GREEN ROLLING HILLS slowly unfolded themselves as the wagon swayed monotonously over the rutted, bumpy road. Matt Young let the tired horses set their own pace and tried to absorb the jolting motion of the high seat as he permitted his mind to wander off—the way it had so many times during the past two weeks—into his own private dream.

Once again in his dream he had completed his 400-mile journey on foot, all the way from his homestead in northwestern Iowa, diagonally across the state, southeastward, and had arrived finally in Springfield, Illinois. There he had worked through the hard winter, had married the waiting Marie, and had bought his team and wagon. And now it was early spring, and he was returning to his land—his own land—with Marie at his side. The wagon, its canvas top bright in the morning sun, was a lonely schooner—a prairie schooner sailing slowly but steadily northwestward through the vast sea of tall, billowing grass. And there, at last, was Old Swen and his wife, his only neighbors, standing beside their sod hut, waving welcoming arms . . .

The sudden halt of the wagon broke Matt's reverie and brought him suddenly back to grim reality.

No, he was not driving his own team and wagon; it was not spring; his beloved Marie was not at his side; and he was not headed back toward his homestead. No, he was headed straight for Fort Madison—and the State Penitentiary. There, as decreed by the judge, he would spend two years for horse stealing.

Sheriff Birdney stuck his head and shoulders up from the back of the wagon. "Can't you make them hosses git along?" he demanded, his voice grating on Matt's ears.

"They're tuckered out," Matt said. "Got to let them take their time." The sides of the two horses were heaving, and white lather and dried brine had made ridges along their harness straps.

Sheriff Birdney spat tobacco juice over the side of the wagon and brushed the stained stubble

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

around his mouth with the back of a dirty hand. He was a dumpy man with a paunch that insisted on hanging out from beneath his vest and down over his belt. His clothes were rumpled, and bits of straw clung to his wispy hair. His badge, polished occasionally by the rub of a soiled shirt sleeve, was the only reasonably clean thing about him.

"You should never tried to steal these hosses from Squire Niddle in the fust place!" he grumbled. For the past two days the Sheriff had been uncomfortably sober, and he was now in a nasty mood.

"Dammit, I wasn't trying to steal these horses!" Matt snapped. He was getting tired of the constant arguing. Drunk, the Sheriff was bad enough; sober, he was insufferable. "I sprained my ankle on my second day of walking. The horses were grazing nearby. I got on one and only meant to ride a bit to rest my ankle. And I was just getting off when you rode up and arrested me."

"That's what you told the court," said the Sheriff. "But the jury didn't see it that way."

"The jury had no choice," said Matt. "Squire Niddle owns all of Niddleton and all the people in it—including you!"

Matt got the team under way again.

"I'll be glad when I turn you over to the Warden," the Sheriff said, settling himself back into the straw-filled wagon box. "You shore been a mighty big chore to me."

The crinkles at the edges of Matt's wide mouth and brown eyes bespoke of a deep sense of humor. Under other circumstances he would have laughed at the Sheriff's last statement. For the past ten days of the journey, ever since Matt had given his word not to try to escape, the Sheriff's "mighty big chore" had been to loll in the warmth of the Indian Summer sun in the straw of the wagon, chewing tobacco, eating corn pone, drinking whiskey, snoozing, boasting of his many heroic deeds as Sheriff, and congratulating himself on the fact that he would be re-elected to office because he had caught himself a horse thief. And Matt had done all the driving, foraging, cooking, and camp work—all the hard work.

Well, they had fared better that way—much better. Matt was accustomed to fending for himself and living off the countryside. During the three years he had spent in the Union Army—until he had received the Rebel musket ball in his ankle which had brought him his discharge and an opportunity to homestead a quarter-section of land—he had become adept at the art of foraging. And that art had been indispensable during the two lean years he had spent improving the land—the land that now would never be his.

"Not only gotta take you to Fort Madison," the Sheriff complained,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"but gotta drive the team all the way back home. By myself!"

They passed through Burlington early the next morning, stopping only long enough for the Sheriff to buy a measure of corn meal, some salt, and two bottles of whiskey. Then they were on the well-beaten road that led southward between the silent Mississippi on their left and the great hills and stone cliffs on their right, and Sheriff Birdney was steadily sampling the liquid portion of the supplies, babbling his usual nonsense as he sampled.

Matt realized that each step the tired horses took brought him that much nearer to Springfield and to Marie—and, ironically, that much farther away. He would have to write to her, try to explain things. But what could he say? That he had been convicted of horse stealing?

And come spring, Swen and his wife would worry about him, wonder what had happened to him. He would have to get word to them somehow, tell them they could have his team of oxen and his few tools, tell them that he wouldn't be coming back for that final successive year to "prove up" on his land.

"And don't you try to escape, young feller," the Sheriff rattled on. "Won't do you no good, you know."

Matt had long ago given up all ideas of escape. Freedom would only make a fugitive of him. And he would not be able to marry Marie, ever—not with a jail sentence hanging over him.

They made camp south of Skunk River that night, a few miles from Fort Madison, and before Matt had completed the camp chores, thunderclouds began to roll down from the northwest.

Sheriff Birdney hadn't bothered to get out of the wagon for the supper that Matt had prepared for him. Bottle in hand, he was now in high spirits. "Young feller," he said, for possibly the tenth time since they had left Burlington that morning, "iffen we get an early start in the morning, I'll be well rid of you 'fore noon—rid of you for good!"

Matt reached into the wagon and began gathering up his pack sack and blankets. His hand bumped into the extra bottle of whiskey, and he slipped it into his pack. The quicker the old coot ran out of whiskey, the sooner he'd settle down and shut up.

"I ever tell you how me and the Squire got this here wagon and these very hosses you was tryin' to steal?"

Matt didn't say anything. He spread his blankets in the shelter of the wagon box. He had long ago grown weary of the constant jabbering.

"Well, there was this here old Swede and his wife come down from Minnesota, drivin' this here team of blacks and an old rickety wagon. Old Swede wanted to set up a blacksmith shop in town, but

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he didn't have no money, so he borried some from the Squire, puttin' up the team as c'latteral. Then he built this here wagon and hauled lumber from the Squire's mill to build his shop."

Matt crawled into his blankets and pillowed his head on the pack sack.

"Well, when he got all finished and ready for business, he found out he couldn't get a license to run the shop. You see, *I* applied for a license jest a day or two ahead of him, and, of course, there wasn't room enough in Niddleton for *two* blacksmith shops!" Sheriff Birdney's loud chuckle rose high into the thunder of the night. "You should've heard that old Swede sputter and stutter!"

Sputter and stutter! The words drove themselves suddenly into Matt's consciousness.

"Naturally, he couldn't pay back the money he owed, so the Squire had to take over his team. And he couldn't get no work, neither, so him and his wife jest had to high-tail it outta town and leave the team, the shop, this here wagon, and the whole kit and kaboodle behind!" He chuckled again and gurgled at his bottle. "And that's the last we ever seen of old Swensen!"

Old Swen!

Sudden anger boiled up within Matt. So that was why Old Swen and his wife had come trudging across the prairie with nothing more than what they carried on their backs! And Old Swen had been too proud to tell Matt of their troubles, had merely said they had come down from Minnesota.

Half out of his blankets, Matt checked himself. It wouldn't do any good to beat the drunken old fool in the wagon to a pulp. It wouldn't help Old Swen any, and it was bound to make matters worse for himself. He eased himself slowly back into his blankets, his fists clenched tightly at his sides.

Rain spattered and hissed in the dying embers of the fire, and in a few moments snores and wheezes came from the wagon.

Matt tossed about, restlessly. Never before in his life had he felt so utterly whipped, so inadequate, so helpless to fight back. He would spend two years in jail for a crime he did not commit, and all the while Sheriff Birdney and Squire Niddle would go scot-free. It didn't make any sense!

When sleep finally came, it was fitful and filled with nightmare. Then, sometime long after the rain had stopped, the old dream returned—the only dream he had to cling to—and once again he saw himself arriving at his own sod hut with Marie seated in the wagon by his side. And Old Swen and his wife were waiting, and Old Swen, finally recognizing his own wagon and team, was sputtering and stuttering—the way he always did

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

when he was too excited for the words to come out right.

And, slowly, Matt's tight lips began to relax. . .

Warden Curtis looked up from his desk as two guards, armed with rifles, ushered the two men into the room.

One of the men was a tall, cleanly shaven young fellow with a wide mouth and serious eyes. The other was a potbellied, slovenly coot with wisps of hair hanging down over bleary eyes; he was unsteady on his feet—as if he had had recent companionship with a whiskey bottle.

One of the guards strode forward. "The commitment papers, sir," he said, placing an envelope on the desk.

The Warden withdrew the papers and shuffled through them. "Matthew Young," he read, "Mercer County, Illinois. Convicted of theft and sentenced to the State Penitentiary for two years . . . hm, seems to be all in order."

He handed the papers back to the guard. "Make out the usual receipt," the Warden instructed, "and post it back to Niddleton." He motioned to the other guard, and said, "Lock the prisoner up."

When the second guard extended his hand, the prisoner came suddenly to life. He knocked down the guard's hand, and began to shout, "Dammit, I'm not—"

The other guard did not hesitate. He brought down the butt of his rifle on the prisoner's head, and the prisoner slumped to the floor, his eyes closing. The two guards dragged the prisoner away.

As the team of black horses clattered across the wooden bridge toward the Illinois side of the Mississippi, Matt leaned back in the seat and gave vent to a bellowing laugh that set the ears of the team to wiggling. How long before Squire Niddle sent someone on the long journey to look for Birdney? Never! The Squire would figure that the Sheriff had got drunk, sold the team and wagon, and headed west.

Matt smote his thigh and roared again. "And when Birdney finishes my term for me, he won't dare go back and show his face in Niddleton—they'd laugh him off the street!"

Still chuckling, Matt unpinned Sheriff Birdney's badge from his shirt and tossed it into the Mississippi River.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

***a NEW story by* AVRAM DAVIDSON**

Once again Avram Davidson gives us the strange, offbeat, perhaps unique kind of story that only he, among today's mystery short-story writers, can produce—a story all his own, rich in detail, piquant in flavor, succulent in background, with the Avramesque touch, the genuine Davidson stamp . . . about six English-speaking people living in Monte del Incarnacion in the Republic of Hidalgo, and of the group's "funny, odd custom"—but much more important, of the funny, odd problem which the six expatriates faced so far away from their homelands . . .

THE THIRD SACRED WELL OF THE TEMPLE

by AVRAM DAVIDSON

". . . WHOSE NAME, SANTO DOMINGO Alburnosi—note the Moorish influence, if you please: The Man With the Burnoose!—might give some indication as to just why the *alcalde* himself was not over-anxious to entertain an official of the Holy Office. No matter that he was the founder of the settlement and had built two churches entirely with his own funds and at least partly with his own hands. No matter that his religious orthodoxy was locally irreproachable. No matter, no matter. For the expected Inquisitor was bound to be suspicious of a man only two generations removed from a *Morisco* anscestor.

"Who could know that no trace of Moslem sentiment still beat in such a heart?—I am, of course, speculating, conjecturing. What is, however, beyond conjecture or speculation, is that the Inquisitor—armed with documents of special power, before which the Viceroy trembled and the Captain-General turned pale, and even the good Archbishop himself was utterly helpless—the Inquisitor, I say, with his mules and his men and his moneybags and his documents, left the port of Santa Luisa and headed for our own beloved Monte del Incarnacion.

"He never arrived. No trace of him was ever found. Robbery—of those moneybags of which I spoke, for there were no banks, no travelers checks in those days—robbery. Thus, the verdict of history. But I might be bold enough to suggest

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

my own verdict, based on my personal researches over some period of time. This, however, must wait upon another occasion, for I see by our hostess' charming old ormolu clock that I must now cease from boring you further. This lovely timepiece, like our cherished Mountain itself, often seems to keep its own time—but it is not to be heeded the less for that, is it? Thank you for your patience."

The speaker, Richard Stanley, sat down to applause as hearty as the other three men and two women present could make it. A slight flush of pleasure came over his round face and was visible even in the part of his silky white hair. He looked around, still a trifle hesitant, then began to beam.

"Richard, you always make everything sound so fascinating!" exclaimed the hostess, Helen, a slender woman of late middle-age, whose face still testified to the sometime presence of beauty. "What did really happen to that old Inquisitor? Won't you even give us a hint?"

"Richard, old boy, you even had *me* interested," a thickset man with a dark red beard commented, eagerly taking a mug from the tray offered by a smiling, silent servant. "Helen, I say! I thought *I* was the champion local drink-mixer, but this tops anything I've ever concocted!"

A man and a woman, both still young, came up and offered their hands to the white-haired Richard Stanley. Their manner was shy and they were slow to speak, but—patiently and wordlessly—he encouraged them.

"We both enjoyed your talk tonight," the young woman said at last. Her husband nodded, smiling.

"I am so glad. You didn't think my prose a little too purple?"

They shook their heads simultaneously, their faces reproaching the very suggestion. But an older man, big of body though slightly stooped, clapped Richard on the back.

"Purple? Of course it was purple. All the greatest prose ever written is purple. Dr. Johnson, Lafcadio Hearn . . ."

Richard's face became even pinker with pleasure. In the momentary silence, the hostess' soft voice was heard, explaining her success with the mixed drink.

". . . the juice of one quarter. That's all. I have never really been sure, you know, Captain, if they are lemons or limes, or perhaps a hybrid. And if you ask, they just smile and shrug, of course. And of course they are right. What does it really matter?"

The Captain nodded, his slightly rufous eyes peering over the rim of the blue pottery mug as he took another swallow. "I'm glad to hear they're ripe again. The seasons seem to pass so quickly. I wish there were more of them, whatever they are. But maybe this way is best, with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

just enough to go around . . ." His voice ebbed, contentedly.

At one end of the room a fire of native cedar burned brightly, a faint odor of its scented flesh perfuming the air. The fireplace was raised, and a rounded hood of stone and plaster blended gently into the wall, tinted with a cream-colored wash. Dark old wooden beams stretched across the ceiling, ochreous leather chairs stood here and there, and in the center was a settee which seemed only the sturdier for its two hundred years.

On the tiled floors were Indian rugs, with a few choicer specimens hanging on the wall. One showed Achichihuatzl, the local myth-hero, in victorious combat with the evil serpent Ixtitihuango—both so highly stylized as to be unrecognizable to the unfamiliar.

And facing them was a long and narrow 18th Century picture of St. George slaying the dragon. It was painted on a single piece of wood, presumably by a local artist, for although the *santo* wore the clothes and armor and ceremonial regalia of a Spanish officer, at the temples of his helmet were the bird-wings of Achichihuatzl, and the dragon had more in him than a hint of Ixtitihuango; the feet of the victor were thrust into stirrups of the sort still to be seen in the equipage of every horseman in Monte del Incarnacion and environs—though nowhere else—and the lance piercing the scaly hide of Evil might have been modeled after the ancient one hanging over the fireplace.

Outside a very gentle rain was falling. The scent of clean wet earth, mingled with that of night flowers and blossoming trees, came through the little triangular window under the eaves, and mingled again, not at all unpleasantly, with the pleasant and savory smells from the kitchen—of bits of meat grilling over embers, and over the sauce into which they would presently be dipped: chili powder and fresh chopped chili, honey, tart fruit, and the rich juice and dripping of the meat itself.

Somewhere, in a nearby *quinta*, a voice accompanied by a guitar and the Indian *tompillo*, began a song—the high ornate notes of antique Hispanic cantilation; then, suddenly, but somehow appropriately, the deeper and steadier melody of the *oaxixen*.

The guests and hostess listened, silent, pleased. They exchanged looks of deep satisfaction. The servants came in with trays of food, the voice and its accompaniment ended, and a night bird sounded its few sweet notes in the lemon grove . . .

Richard Stanley had for some years taught history at a small college, but found that he was increasingly unable to cope with his work. Some men would have found it bearable, even soothing, to go

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

through the same scheduled subjects year after year; to receive the same answers to the same questions and to issue the same grades; to arise at fixed hours and lecture at fixed hours; to parry semester after semester the unripe rudeness of adolescent students; to engage in the unvarying hypocrisy of rigid and petty small-college faculty politics and socializing.

It was not out of any resolved attitude or principle that Richard Stanley found any or all of this unbearable. Something in his metabolism seemed to be at fault—ceased, so to speak, to secrete the necessary hormones or enzymes. Conscientiously he reported this to his president.

"We can't have any nervous breakdowns on our faculty," the man said helpfully. "Tell you what you better do. Better see Dr. Wombaugh, the students' psychologist—he can help you decide what you're going to do next year."

Thus subtly informed that he need expect no renewal of contract (and, in fact, desiring none), Richard Stanley obediently reported to the office of Dr. Wombaugh. There he found a copy of *The Literary Digest* (predicting the election of Alf M. Landon by a landslide), a copy of a soon-to-be-extinct humor magazine full of He/She jokes, and a copy of *The National Geographic*.

He thumbed listlessly through a pictorial account of the nesting habits of the bulbul of the Hindu Kush, an article on Picturesque Patagonia, another on New Insights to Old Zeeland, and came, finally, to a description of the Republic of Hidalgo—Where the Palm and the Pine Meet.

By the time the doctor's assistant got around to looking into the waiting room, Mr. Richard Stanley was no longer there. His savings were not large, but travel was cheap in those days. The port of Santa Luisa, where the banana boat left him, was full of unshaven customs officials with rude manners, demanding cab drivers with worse, and swarms of street gamins with none at all. In short, a larger, tropical, and equally uncopeable, version of a small college.

The fact was obvious: the Palm would not do. Would the Pine? Richard Stanley had to see.

It took him three days, in that not very large country, to get by railroad, riverboat, and narow-gauge railroad to his destination. He did not know, then, that it was his destination. He knew that he seemed suddenly to come alive one afternoon when the toy train jerked to a stop in front of a toy station. He was no longer hot, no longer torpid. Not only was there not a palm in sight, there—not twenty feet away—was the great-grandfather of all pines.

Richard Stanley seized his bag and got off the train. The sign on the tiny depot read *Monte del Incarnacion*. He could see no moun-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tain. Only one person in sight seemed to be moving, an old Indian lady draped all in black. He followed her.

On the other side of the station, in a tiny plaza flanked by a tiny church, sat a large brown man on the driver's seat of a curious vehicle, half stage-coach, half diligence, with sides bulging out and a pair of folding steps behind. The old woman clambered up the steps. Richard Stanley followed. They were presently joined by a man in a linen suit and a large black mustache.

After a while the train whistled and tooted and chuffed away. The four mules stopped trying to bite off their harness and broke into something vaguely resembling a gallop. The road went up steadily. A stone marker said *Monte del I K 10.* Now and then a gap in the trees lining the road showed a glimpse of the countryside. It was quite beautiful—hills and valleys and forests and lakes and farms, with blue mountains in the distance and green ones near at hand.

"I think this is it," Stanley said, half aloud. "I really do."

Late in the afternoon the mules ambled into the town of which the railroad station was merely . . . the railroad station. "Oh!" Richard exclaimed. "Oh, my!"

Above the town the great Mountain of the Incarnation raised its massy peak, wreathed in but not obscured by fleecy clouds. There was only one automobile in sight, but there were a good many horses. The plaza itself was cobbled, but nothing else was paved. The air was clear and fresh and sparkled in the late afternoon sunlight. A group of Indian men came by, clad in a sort of white kilted costume belted by a sash of red and purple which went over one shoulder. They smiled at him, greeted him in a language which was not Spanish. Richard smiled back.

The town which surrounded him was totally Spanish—or, rather, totally Spanish Colonial. With the solitary exception of a two-story red brick building—evidently a convent and school of the time of Pius IX—there did not seem to be a single structure which had been built in the Republican period.

On one side of the plaza was a building which looked like an inn. Suddenly aware of hunger, Richard went in and sat down at a table. He was served, with grave courtesy, a large clean meal; and after a few long and tranquil hours over coffee, rum, and mild cigars, he was shown to a large clean room. The room had a window at each end, one opening onto the courtyard and the other onto the plaza. The Mountain showed at both.

"I do not believe," Richard Stanley said, shortly after he had wakened and washed, "that I will ever leave."

And he never did.

The morning after the gathering

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

at which he had read the latest of his papers on the history of the Monte del Incarnacion region, Richard Stanley was at the side of his room which served as a study, examining an old map lent to him by his friend, the Director of the little-visited library and museum, when the proprietor of the inn entered. Stanley anticipated the familiar questions by praising his recently eaten breakfast: the eggs were exquisitely fresh, the coffee deliciously hot, the fruit perfectly ripe —in short, a rich and succulent meal.

Don Nestor beamed, bowed, and eventually came to the point of his visit. There was in the dining room of the inn a stranger, either an Englisher or a Northamericano, who desired to know if there were any other Englishers or Northamericanos in the community. And, as Don Ricardo was the nearest such, he, Don Nestor had—

"Perfectly," said Stanley. "I will go down to see him in a little moment."

"Ah, you are very genteel. I will tell him. With permission . . ."

"Pass, your mercy."

Stanley took a last fond look at the old map, covered with old-fashioned Spanish calligraphy and Indian symbols or pictographs, and at length walked down the winding stairs to the first floor of the inn.

An informal but decently dressed man of early middle-age was drinking coffee. He looked up and waved.

"You must be the English-speaking fellow the owner was telling me about," he said.

"I am Richard Stanley."

"Bob Pepper. Know how I knew? The complexion. I can tell it every time."

Stanley took the proferred seat. "There are many natives of the area," he said, "who are lighter or ruddier than I am. Let us not forget that the Goths were in Spain, the Celts before them, and as for the Iberians—"

"I can tell it every time. Something about the complexion. Isn't this a great little town? Beautiful, unspoiled, a *lovely* climate—"

Stanley nodded, smiling assent to every point.

"—lovely people—*AND—do you know what I paid for breakfast?* I. Paid. One. *Dolar*. One, I tell you, count them, one. For eggs, steak, coffee, toast, *damned* good jelly, some kind of fruit, *very* good fruit—for all this I paid one *dolar!* Isn't that in*cred*ible? All that for only twelve and a half cents, U.S.A. Wow!"

Warming to all this appreciation of his chosen residence, Stanley invited the visitor, Bob Pepper, to take a walk around the town. "If you'd like. That is, if you can spare the time."

"I'd like nothing better. If *you* can spare the time."

A wagon ornamented with pictures illustrative of the history and miracles of St. Fransico, and loaded

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with corn for one of the small mills in the town, passed by, its horse-bells jingling. The driver, removing his hat, greeted Stanley and his companion.

"Oh, I can always spare time," Stanley said, putting his own hat back on. "That's one reason why I love it so here. I don't suppose you've ever heard of Heeber College in New Wurtemburg, Nebraska . . . I thought not. I could never spare time there. The local citizens here regard time only as something which is sounded by the church bells. The bells only sound noon, midnight, and the ecclesiastical hours. And those of us who hail from more bustling climes have fallen—happily, I will say—into the local ways of thought."

He showed Bob Pepper the bull ring, with its quaint and unusual carved wooden balconies; the now-disused bear pit—bears had been brought, on occasion, from as far away as California, at great cost; the Little Market, which had once been enlarged so that ever since it had been bigger than the Big Market; the baroque church, *La Parroquia*, and the ancient and original church of the founding father.

"What are those people doing on the steps of those little-bitty churches next to that big wild pink one?" demanded Bob Pepper. And he was so struck by the reply that he hastily pulled a notebook and jotted it down. Chapels dedicated to The Seven Wise Virgins of the Parable! Which the Indians identified with The Seven Sweet Sisters of their own mythology! Said their Christian prayers properly inside! Then came outside and made their pagan offerings on the steps! Incense, cornmeal, rose petals, honey, parrot feathers—and whatnot!

Wow!

Bob Pepper was completely enamored of all that Richard Stanley had to say about Monte del Incarnacion.

After lunch—a lunch so big with a price so small that Pepper could scarcely eat it all from excitement—the newcomer declared that he had some pictures to take. He invited, he even pressed his guide to come along; but Stanley explained that he paid a call every Friday afternoon on his friend, Captain Stone.

"We have a rather funny, odd custom here, Mr. Pepper—Bob. We visit each other only once a week, and we have a once-a-week get-together where we *all* meet. We—by *we* I mean the other English-speaking people here in town—there are only six of us, so it works out quite well, giving all of us periodic days entirely to ourselves and preventing our getting on each other's nerves—and so we remain very happy and contented here, you see."

Bob Pepper nodded and agreed to meet him later on at Captain Stone's *quinta*. "Gee, this is a peach of a place!" he exclaimed deliriously,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

arranging his photographic equipment, and starting out into the clean picturesque streets. Then a sudden thought occurred to Stanley, and he called the visitor back.

"Are you—would you be interested perhaps . . ." he said haltingly, rather wistfully, ". . . in old Indian ruins?"

"*Would* I!"

Stanley, in a rush of words, explained to him that the remains of the Temple of Achichihuatzl lay higher up the Mountain, deep in the woods. He could hardly say that he had "discovered" them; they had never been lost, only neglected . . .

". . . and he said he would very much like to see the Temple, so I promised to take him tomorrow," Stanley finished his account of the newcomer to the red-bearded Captain Stone.

The Captain, who had been nodding and grunting and showing other signs of following the narrative, gave a little start as Stanley finished. He raised his rufous eyebrows. "What? Sun over the yardarm? Let's see what there is to drink, then I want to show you my scale model of the Battle of Jutland. Gin! Gin! Good old *genebra!* And you, old boy, I suppose you'll want yours fancied up with pomegranate juice and other foo-foo waters."

Stanley nodded delightedly.

The Captain hummed a naughty, nautical song to himself, off-key, as he raised bottle and glass. Then he stopped humming. A puzzled, unhappy look came over his face. For a moment he stood still, then he lowered glass and bottle.

"Richard, forgive me. I'm afraid I was not following all you said with the attention which courtesy requires. But did I hear—*did* you say that this fellow's name was *Pepper*?"

"Why, yes. Why?"

The Captain stared at him, and uttered a groan of deepest misery. Then, swiftly, he poured a tumbler half full of straight gin and drank it down in three swallows. Then he looked at his astonished guest and pronounced a religious phrase in a most profane tone.

"This is the end," he said. "This is the end."

Once again the San Jorge looked down on a gathering of the tiny English-speaking colony of Monte del Incarnacion; but this time the atmosphere was quite different. It was late afternoon; there were no songs, no spicy smells from the kitchen, and no one was smiling. Captain Stone had the floor.

"All right, let's get on with it," the Captain said. "We have a bitter draft to swallow, and what the antidote might be—if there is any—I do not know . . ."

He paused, shifted his eyes to a point where the rafters and ceiling met, and went on in a stiff, painful tone of voice. "Briefly, my story is this: I was commander of one of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

His Majesty's ships and one night—a night which I should like to forget—I put that ship on the Goodwin Sands. Two tugs were required to get her off. Charges were made against me—charges ranging from incompetence to intoxication. I was spared the disgrace of being cashiered. I was allowed to resign. Naturally, I was expected to remove myself as far from England as I could, and so I did."

He did not suppose, the Captain said, that any of them had ever heard at that time of Olang Batto. He himself had located it with some difficulty. Picture to yourselves (he asked his friends) an island only half a day's journey by sea from Singapore, yet on no regular shipping route and known to hardly anyone in that great city. Clean sea breezes, yellow sands, rents so small as to be almost invisible by civilized standards, ample and inexpensive provisions, competent servants at ridiculously low salaries. Malay fishing villages and a trading town which was a small Chinese city in miniature.

"There I lived," the Captain said, "for twenty years in perfect peace, in perfect contentment. My slender income was not only sufficient, I was even able to save a bit. No one had ever heard of my past, or would have cared about it. And then one day—"

He paused. His throat worked. "One day, as I was walking along the boat landing to see if my copies of *The Times* had come in, a young man stepped ashore from a sampan and hailed me in English. I greeted him courteously, invited him to my place, gave him drinks and tiffin, and escorted him all round the island. There being no hotel, I lodged him and fed him for two days until a trading vessel heading for Kuala Lampur chanced to put in and took him aboard. I heard nothing further from him for some months.

"Further intelligence came like a burst of thunder upon my heretofore peaceful existence. The man, it seemed, was not a mere wanderer as I had thought, not even a mere tripper or beachcomber. He was a *journalist*, I learned to my horror. He had written up his experiences in articles variously describing Olang Batto as The Poor Man's Shanghai or The Tahiti of the Malayan Archipelago. This article was syndicated—I believe that is the term—and consequently appeared in newspapers published in Singapore, Sydney, Melbourne, Bombay, Calcutta, Capetown, London, New York, Los Angeles, and every large city in the Republic of Texas."

The results were catastrophic. Within two years Olang Batto had become a port of call. Tourists thronged its once little-frequented lanes. Hotels were built, restaurants, cabarets. The nights, formerly disturbed only by the booming of the surf and the occasional roar of a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bull crocodile, now became hideous with jazz music. Rents went up 1000 and even 2000%. Servants betook themselves to high-paid positions in the expensive villas of newcomers. Tailors who had once been happy to make a suit of pongees for five Straits dollars now demanded fifty—and were insolent and dilatory. Farmers ceased to bring their produce to private dwellings and sold them at inflated prices to the multitude of establishments erected to cater to the needs of tourists.

"I was even recognized on the street by a newspaper photographer from *The Daily Mail*," Captain Stone continued bitterly. "I packed my belongings and fled into the night, obtaining passage on a sea junk engaged in the pearl shell and bêche-de-mer trade." A single tear slipped down into his red beard. He plucked a large handkerchief from his sleeve and blew his rufous nose resoundingly. "Need I say," he concluded, "that the man who had brought all this about was the infamous scribbler and penny-a-line spy, Robert Pepper?"

The somber silence which followed was finally broken by the soft voice of the hostess. "I was born and raised in Canada," she said, "and had an uneventful but rather happy life, particularly with my husband and only child. I lost them both—under tragic and well-publicized circumstances which I cannot bear to describe. You must excuse me.

"Most of my income perished with my husband. I had and have no commercial talents. Not caring much what happened to myself, but being under the necessity of sustaining life and finding some occupation or preoccupation, I went to Newfoundland, and settled in the smallest, most remote community I could find which offered some minimum of amenities.

"The place was called Little York Cove. The people fished for cod, hunted seal, raised potatoes. In the nearby rivers were salmon and trout. It was a rather severe life, but it was simple and clean. I became an amateur fisherwoman of some skill, and I learned to make the most of the brief winter days as well as the long, long ones of summer. I could not afford to buy a house, but I rented one for a moderate sum and gradually fixed it up to my liking. I was happy."

Happy, that is, until a brief but searching visit by a man she did not know. His visit resulted in a series of newspaper and magazine articles describing Little York Cove as a Fisherman's Paradise and a New Low-Priced Vacationland. The village was not adequate to house and supply the swarms of people attracted by the articles. So new buildings were erected, but even so there was an inevitable increase in rents.

Helen's landlady informed her, regretfully, that she could no longer let her have the house for its cur-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rent price as she had been offered five times that amount by a Montreal Sporting Club. And then a story appeared in the St. John's newspaper (which circulated locally), describing the boom at Little York Cove, and incidentally mentioning that among the residents was a woman who had lost her husband and child under tragic and once well-known circumstances, which it proceeded to recapitulate in gory detail.

Helen left the next week.

The name of the writer whose report had worked these far-reaching changes was Robert Pepper.

The story told—slowly, painfully—by Don and Donna Smith was not too dissimilar. All their lives they had suffered from extreme shyness. They had met, in fact, at a party to which they had been dragged by different sets of friends, and found each other huddling diffidently in the same corner.

After their marriage they acted on a mutual resolve to avoid crowds, and believing that in a country of a different language their bashfulness would be less obvious and hence less troublesome, they moved to a town in the Cape Verde Islands. They obtained a lease, at a most moderate sum, on one of the many splendid old houses that dated from the period when the town was an outpost of Portuguese empire. Food was equally inexpensive; they kept several horses and they swam a good deal. Also resident in the town were an Indo-Chinese ex-King and a family of exiled Balkan nobles.

The shy Smiths smiled politely at them in passing and were in turn politely smiled at. They did not so much invite Robert Pepper into their *facienda* as suffer his presumptive presence; they were infinitely relieved when he left.

Pepper thoughtfully sent them clippings in several languages which commended the Smiths for their "hospitality" and spared no detail, however slight, about San Jao—Hideway Home of Princes and Potentates and Sun-kissed Shangri-la.

At first it meant little to the Smiths. Bewildered when the flowering tree-lined streets of the old town began to swarm with visitors, they retreated behind their walls, refusing in terror to answer the repeated calls of the bell, or—when the bell was disconnected—trying not to hear the constant pounding on the gate. Isolation proved impossible when they were informed that their sea-near *facienda* had been sold as a nucleus of a posh residential hotel to be erected by a syndicate of Scotch herring smokers in search of a better climate and a more diversified portfolio.

The last to tell his story was a thin dry grayish man who in a thin dry grayish voice briefly related a like account.

Arthur Clay had settled in the neighboring Republic of Santa Anna "before"—as he put it—"any of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

these countries had signed extradition treaties with the United States." Making botany his new interest, he had classified over 1800 species of plant life unknown to taxonomical science before the questing eye of R. Pepper had lighted on the pleasant piedmont area called Las Mesas, where Mr. Clay was making his home.

Enlarging on the picturesqueness of the native costumes and festivals, the fertility of the soil, the amiability of the population, and the low tax policy of the Santa Anna government, Pepper's widely syndicated column had brought such an influx of new people to Las Mesas that before long Arthur Clay beheld, vanishing before his eyes, the wild plant life he could no longer afford to study and catalogue . . .

Captain Stone's deep and angry voice jerked them out of their profound silence.

There was, he declared, a sort of fourfold pattern visible in this whole ironic business. *First* (he counted on a huge hairy finger), a group of people who, for one good reason or another, were unable to live in their original homes and societies. *Second*, this same group of people had the useful talent of being able to locate little-known, remote, and pleasant places in which they *were* able to live. *Third*, this filthy swine, Robert Pepper, seemed to possess a similar talent for nosing out such places, but only after they had originally been discovered by the same group.

"*Fourth*, and most damnable," the Captain trumpeted, "is that every 'discovery' he makes is—for everyone except himself—utterly self-defeating! He writes about places which are little-known; directly they become famous! He writes about places which are cheap; immediately they become expensive! He advertises places which are unspoiled, and in a short time they are spoiled into corruption. He is, in short, a cuckoo laying his cockatrice's eggs in nests which he invariably fouls as a reward for hospitality!"

When the echo of his voice had died away Helen said, hopeless beyond despair, "And there is nothing we can do about it."

"Yes, there is! There is!" cried Captain Stone. "We can at least refuse to help the rogue! We can refuse to assist him in spying out the land! We can—"

He fell into a fit of coughing, toward the subsidence of which Richard Stanley was heard to say, "But I promised."

"Promised what?" Arthur Clay asked.

Promised to show Pepper the ruins of the Temple of Achichihuatzl, Richard Stanley said. The next morning.

In vain it was pointed out to him, in tones most urgent, that this was just the sort of thing on which Pepper doted. Ruins! Temples!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Picturesque antiquities! He would lap it up, spread the news far and wide.

"What do you think will happen to all of us when he gets done?" Captain Stone demanded, face redder than his beard. "What do you suppose will happen to *you*? You told me yourself that you live on the $750 a year you get from two non-amortizing mortgages your sister gave you. Could you live on that anywhere else in the world?

"Do you know how much Coca-Cola a thousand tourists a month can drink? They won't be satisfied to drink it *tempo* as the locals do, they'll want it *frio*—and not from an ice bucket, either, because they'll be afraid of bugs in the ice. No, they'll want it chilled in a refrigerator, and nice old Don Nestor will have to buy one—he'll have to buy a big one—he'll have to borrow money to pay for it—and he won't be able to go on lodging you and feeding you at the bargain-basement rates he's charging now.

"What will you do when he raises your rent, Richard? Where will you go? How will you live?"

They all looked at him—the furious Captain Stone, the hopeless Helen, the grim Arthur Clay, and the terrified Smiths.

He had no answer. All he could say, over and over again, was, "But I promised, I promised . . ."

The next morning he met Bob Pepper, already bubbling over with enthusiasm. "How far are these ruined temples of yours, Dicky-boy? Very far?" He was festooned with cameras and such impedimenta.

"Not really. Not if you don't mind a rather long walk."

"*I* don't mind! I'll take lots of shots on the way. Love that scenery! Hey, see that *muchacha*? What a pair of legs! Hey?"

He did not take many shots after all, for the trail along which Stanley led him was a narrow track between thick growths of trees; so Pepper began to ask questions about the ruins and who built them. Stanley warmed to the subject.

The local Indians (he said), though not comparable in the level of their culture and technology with the Aztecs, Mayas, or Incas, had nevertheless achieved a rather high degree of both. They worked well in stone and metal, had a complex and extremely interesting code of manners, and were opposed to shedding human blood.

"Red-skin Quakers!" Pepper exclaimed, pushing aside an obtrusive branch. "You must have made quite a study of all this, huh?"

"Oh, I have. For years. And I've learned things which—it sounds romantic but it's true—no other living white man knows."

Bob Pepper grinned happily. He'd have to get all this down on paper. No other living white man—great! Simply great! Such as what?

They had come now to the ruins

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

themselves. Stone statues green with moss leaned at crazy angles, and native pines grew in the courtyard, thrusting up great slabs of stone and covering others with a thick layer of pine needles.

"Well," said Stanley, shy and proud at the same time, "legend refers to The Three Sacred Wells of the Temple. But only two of them—the locations of only two of them, I mean—are known."

"Sacred Wells! Great!"

One—Stanley pointed it out—was The Well of Good Wishes. The other was The Well of Secret Sorrows. And the third—

"It took me over ten years of consulting old accounts and very old maps, and gaining the confidence of the Indians. But in the end, Mr. Pepper—Bob—I finally found it."

Past the area of stone floors and statues they went, and finally stopped under a huge and stately old pine. With his feet Stanley scraped and scraped. The pine needles fell away in heaps to reveal a circular stone engraved with petroglyphs.

"Don't try to lift it—you couldn't," said Stanley. "But *I* can."

Deftly Stanley pressed down at a certain point. Smoothly the stone lid swung up on its pivot. The well gaped ancient and black. Bob Pepper rubbed his hands and peered down.

"Won't the schoolteachers from Des Moines go for this!" he exclaimed. "What's this one called? —don't tell me—it's The Well of the Virgins, right?"

"No," said Stanley. "It isn't. It's called The Well of the Messenger of Evil Tidings."

And Stanley put his right foot diagonally behind Pepper's ankles at the Achilles tendons, and pushed. The irrepressible journalist went straight down without touching the sides. There was no outcry, and only after a long time, a muffled, echoing splash.

Richard Stanley scuffed back the heaps of pine needles and brushed them with a handy fallen branch. Once again the stone cover lay hidden from sight.

He turned and began to walk briskly back to town. If he did not dawdle along the way he would be just in time for lunch. Don Nestor's lunches were as enormous as they were delicious. And, perhaps not least of all, they were so very, very cheap.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CALENDAR OF CRIME

Herewith the CALENDAR OF CRIME *story for the May issue of EQMM (on sale, we remind you, throughout April) . . . and to quote from the story itself: ". . . demonstrating what was to be proved, namely,* Caveat lector."

THE EMPEROR'S DICE

by ELLERY QUEEN

WHEN CALIGULA BECAME EMperor of the world he nominated Incitatus his consul, Incitatus being his horse. On evidence such as this, the grandson of Tiberius is considered by historians to have been crazy. The conclusion is questionable. Consuls in Caligula's day exercised high criminal jurisdiction; obviously, a man could turn his back on his horse. There have been appointments, and not only in Roman history, far less astute.

We are told, too, that Caligula had his adopted son, Lucius, murdered; that he commanded citizens who displeased him to enter the arena; that at the imperial gaming tables this legatee of Tiberius's mighty treasury played with crooked dice; and so on. That these are the historical facts seems indubitable, but do the facts warrant the historians' conclusions?

We have already disposed of the episode of the praetorian horse. As for Lucius, by Tiberius's will he was Caligula's co-heir; and an emperor who murders his co-heir before his co-heir can murder him may be considered of nervous temperament, or overcautious, but he is certainly not irrational. Turning one's enemies into gladiators combines private interest with the public pleasure and is the sign of a political, not a psychotic, mind. And while loading one's dice is indefensible on moral grounds, there is no denying the fact that the practice reduces the odds against the dicer.

In short, far from being a lunatic, Caligula was a man of uncommon sense; demonstrating what was to be proved, namely, *Caveat lector.*

We now leap nineteen centuries.

It was the time of the vernal equinox, or thereabout; in fine, the last day of the third month of the Queenian calendar, and a night of

Copyright 1951, 1952 by Little Brown and Company; reprinted by permission of the author.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

portents it was, speaking in wind, thunder, and rain. Even so, Mark Haggard's voice could be heard above the uproar.

Haggard was driving a leaky station wagon along the Connecticut road with the hands of a charioteer, sawing away at the wheel and roaring oaths against the turbulent heavens as if he were Martius himself. The Queens and Nikki Porter could only embrace one another damply and pray for midnight and the rise of a saner moon.

Ellery did not pine for Connecticut week-ends at unmapped homes occupied by unexplored persons. He had too cartographic a memory of hosts floating about in seas of alcohol or, as happened with equal frequency, forty-eight becalmed hours of Canasta. But the Inspector appeared sentimental about this one.

"Haven't seen Mark, Tracy, or Malvina Haggard since their dad kicked off ten years ago," the Inspector had said, "and I hadn't much contact with Jim's children before that except when they were little. But if they've turned out anything like Jim or Cora . . ."

"They rarely do," Ellery had said pessimistically. "Anyway, did Mark Haggard have to include me in?"

"Jim and I went through the police academy together, son. I was Jim Haggard's best man when he married Cora Maloney in—yep, 1911, just forty years ago. I can see the big lug now," said the Inspector mistily, "standing in front of the preacher in his monkey suit . . . Cora buried Jim in that suit, Ellery."

"Hadn't he gained any weight? But I still don't see why—"

"Ellery's too lofty to mix with ordinary folks, Inspector," Nikki had put in gently. "Too much of a brain, you know. It gets *so* bored. Besides, he knows I can't go unless he does—"

"All right!" howled Ellery; and so here they were, and he hoped they were both thoroughly satisfied.

It had begun with a train that was late, a whistle-stop station that was wrong, no taxi service, and an hour's wait in splashy darkness. Then their host found them, and even the Inspector began to look as if he regretted the whole thing. Haggard was a staring man with a week's black stubble, given to sudden convulsions of laughter, and he drove like a madman.

"Can't tell you how happy I was to hear from you, Mark," said the Inspector, bouncing and hanging on to his dentures. "I feel like a heel having neglected your mother so long. It'll be good seeing Cora again."

"In hell," screamed Mark Haggard, rocketing over a patch of ice left over from the last snowfall.

"What did you say, Mark?"

"Ma's in hell!"

"Oh, I'm sorry to hear it," the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Inspector said confusedly. "I mean, when did she—?"

"Two years ago."

"But not in the hot place," muttered the Inspector. "Not Cora."

Mark Haggard laughed. "You didn't know her. You don't know any of us."

"Yes, people change," sighed the Inspector. Then he tried to sound chatty again. "I remember when your father resigned from the force, Mark. Your mother was against it. But he'd inherited all that money, and I guess it went to his head."

"What makes you think his head was any different before, Inspector? He was crazy. We're all crazy!"

Ellery thought that was an extremely bright remark.

"Is it much further, Mark?" asked the Inspector desperately.

"Yes, I'm so very wet," said Nikki in a gay voice.

"Threw money around like a maniac," said Mark Haggard angrily. "The great collector! Who did he think he was—Rosenbach?"

"Books?" asked Ellery, rousing himself.

"My father? He could hardly read. Gambling collection! Crummy old roulette wheels, medieval playing cards, ancient dice—junk filled the whole Gun Room.—Get over on your side of the road, you —!"

"Sounds like a—harmless enough —hobby," said Nikki jouncily. The other car was lost in the weeping night. Lightning showed them Haggard's face. Nikki closed her eyes.

"Harmless?" chortled their host. "Nothing about our family is harmless. Including the ancestral dump that Pop inherited from Uncle Jonas."

"I suppose," said Nikki, keeping her eyes shut, "you live in a haunted house, Mr. Haggard?"

"Yes!" said Mark Haggard gleefully.

Nikki screeched. But it was only another icy drop pelting the side of her neck.

"Any ghost I know?" asked the Inspector wittily.

"It's the ghost of an unsolved murder mystery."

"Murder mystery!"

"Unsolved?" said Ellery, with a ghost of interest.

"The house was then occupied by a family of five," chuckled their chauffeur, "a father, a mother, and three grown children. The two sons were bugs on hunting and they had a regular arsenal. One night the father's body was found in the Gun Room. He'd been shot to death. It couldn't have been suicide, the servants were away, and from the physical evidence an outside murderer was out of the question. It had to be someone in the house that night, and the only ones in the house that night were the mother and the three grown children. Revolting, hey?"

Ellery stirred.

"Humor him!" whispered Nikki.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Mark's just making this up," said Inspector Queen heartily. "Mark, I'm soaked to the hide. Have you lost your way?"

Haggard laughed again. But then he hurled the station wagon around another car, cursing. "And the best part of it was that nobody ever suspected the father'd been murdered. Not even the police."

"You see?" said the Inspector in a beamy voice. "Fairy tales. Mark, get there!"

"But keep talking," said Ellery. "Just how was the murder concealed?"

"Simplest thing in the world. One of the sons was a medical doctor and the other was an undertaker. The son who was a doctor made out a false death certificate and the son who was an undertaker prepared the body for burial." Haggard's laugh mingled with the rain and the thunder. "So murder didn't out after all. And it won't unless somebody can read those three clues."

"Oh, there were clues," said Ellery. "Three, did you say?"

"This has gone far enough," said the Inspector sharply. "Are you sure, Mark, you're not driving around in circles?" He peered through a window, but they might have been crossing the Styx.

"What were they, Mark? The clues, I mean."

"Ellery," moaned Nikki.

"The bullet which killed the father came from a .38 revolver. There were two .38 revolvers in the Gun Room. So the two .38s were clues—"

"Ballistics checkup," mumbled the Inspector.

"Oh, no," chuckled Mark Haggard. "The bullet passed right through the body and smashed against the bricks of the fireplace. And both guns had been cleaned after the murder."

"And the third clue?"

"You'll love it, Ellery. It was found by the sons in their father's hand."

"Oh? What was it?"

"A pair of dice. Very famous bones they are, too, bloody as hell." And Haggard laughed and laughed.

After a moment Ellery said, "All this happened . . . when did you say, Mark?"

"I didn't. Ten years ago."

"Ten—!" The Inspector checked himself.

"Would you care to see the two revolvers and the dice?"

"Do you still have them?"

"Oh, yes," said Mark. "In a wooden box at home."

"Now that's going too far!" exploded the Inspector. "Mark, either stop this foolishness or turn around and drive us back to the railroad station!"

Mark Haggard laughed again. The lightning flashed, and for a photographic instant they saw his lumpish eyes, the blueness about

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the black stubble, the dance of his hands on the wheel.

Ellery heard Nikki's teeth. "M-Mister Haggard," she chattered, "what do you and your brother d-do for a living?"

"Tracy is a physician," Haggard cried, "and I'm an undertaker."

The station wagon slid to a cascading stop, throwing them violently forward. Mark Haggard sprang into the darkness, and from the darkness they heard him shout, "Get out, get out, we're here!", like some demon commanding them to his pleasure.

This was the beginning of an historic night . . . darkest history. They could make out nothing of the house, but a porch creaked underfoot and things banged somewhere gleefully. Ellery could feel the revulsion in Nikki as she held on to him. Mark Haggard's right fist crashed repeatedly against an invisible door.

"Damn you, Malvina, open the door! Why'd you lock it?"

A creature in a white negligee of the flowing drapery variety stood there, holding aloft in her left hand —Nikki giggled something about a left-handed Statue of Liberty— a candle in a black candlestick. The face behind the candle was blanker than her robe. Only the eyes had life, a peering kind of life.

"I'm glad you've come back, Mark," she said in a perfectly lifeless voice. "The lights went out and then a hot flash followed me all over the house. Wherever I went, it was hot, and it burned, Mark, it burned me. Why did the lights go out?"

"Hot *what?*" muttered the Inspector.

Haggard tried a wall switch. "Power failure—"

"It burns, Mark," his sister intoned.

"Malvina, these are some people visiting us. Give me that candle. I'll get a couple of flashlights."

Mark Haggard's right hand seized the candlestick and the flame darted off, leaving them in darkness, with the white-robed woman.

"Malvina, you remember me, don't you?" The Inspector might have been wheedling a child. "Your father's friend? Richard Queen?"

"No." That was all she said, in the toneless tones; after that inhuman sound, no one said anything. They shivered in the dark among their week-end bags, waiting dully for Mark Haggard's return. The house was deathly cold, with a dampness that attacked like acid.

Mark returned in another rage. "No lights, no heat, no dinner prepared, Tracy gone out on a sick call, servants off somewhere—Malvina! Where the devil are Bessie and Connors?"

"They left. They were going to kill me. I chased them with a kitchen knife and they ran away. And Tracy went away, too. My own brother a doctor, and he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

doesn't care that the hot flashes burn me . . ." They heard a horrible snuffling, and they realized the creature was crying.

Mark thrust a flashlight into Ellery's hand, wielding his own in crazy swoops that touched bare floors, shrouded furniture, his weeping sister. "Stop it or you'll have another fit—" She had it, on the floor, writhing like a frying soul, and screaming, screaming.

"If Tracy hadn't—*No!* I'll handle her alone. Go to your rooms—head of the stairs. You'll find some bread and a can of sardines in the kitchen—"

"Couldn't eat a thing," mumbled Inspector Queen. "Wet clothes . . . go to bed . . ."

But Haggard was gone, running with his sister in his arms, her draperies trailing, the beam of light painting wild parabolas on the darkness. The Inspector said simply, "We'd better get dry, rest a while, and then clear out."

"How about now?" said Nikki. "I sometimes enjoy being wet, and I'm not the least bit tired. I'm sure we could call a cab—"

"While a ten-year-old unsolved murder drifts around the premises crying for its mate?" Ellery glanced up into the black hole of the staircase, his jaw out. "I'm sticking the week-end."

Inspector Queen was stretched on one of the icy twin beds, and Nikki whimpered in the bedroom next door—she had promised hysterics at the suggestion that in the interests of propriety the communicating door be shut—when the men's door burst open and light invaded the room. From the other room Nikki squealed, and the Inspector heaved twelve inches toward the ceiling. Ellery dropped a shoe, definitely.

But it was only Mark Haggard, grinning. He was carrying an electric lantern in one hand and a battered old wooden box the size of a cigar humidor in the other. "The clues to the murder," he chuckled. "Old Mark Elephant!" He slammed the box down on the highboy nearest the door.

Haggard kept looking at Ellery, teeth glittering from the underbrush of stubble. The Inspector scrambled out of bed in his nightshirt as Ellery slowly opened the box.

Two rusty revolvers, Colt .38s, nested in the box. On them lay a small squarish case that looked like gold.

"The dice," said Mark Haggard, smiling. "Open it."

"Hold the light higher," Ellery said. His father craned over his shoulder.

Two crystalline red dice incised in gold sparkled up at them from a bed of purple velvet.

"They look like jewels," exclaimed the Inspector.

"That's what they are," said Mark. "Square-cut rubies with pure

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gold dots inset. These dice are almost as old as the Christian era. Supposed to have been the personal property of the Roman emperor Caligula. We gave them to Pop for his gambling collection."

"This inscription in the case?" Ellery squinted. "Hold the lantern up a bit, Mark . . . *To Dad, from Mark, Malvina, and Tracy, on His Ruby Wedding Anniversary.* In what way, Mark, were these dice a clue to—?"

But Haggard was gone in the arctic night of the hall.

The Inspector heard the sounds first. He reached across the abyss between their beds and touched Ellery on the shoulder. It was a little past three. Ellery awoke instantly.

"Ellery. Listen."

It was still raining, jungle music by a thousand drums. The wind slammed a shutter somewhere. In the next room Nikki's bedsprings complained as she turned desperately over.

Then Ellery heard a floorboard give way and in the same moment ghastly lightning made the bedroom spring alive. A man was standing at the highboy, his right hand reaching for the box Mark Haggard had brought to the room a few hours before.

With the first crack of thunder Ellery jumped out of bed and hurled himself across the room. His shoulder hit the intruder below the knees and the man toppled with a cry, striking his head against the highboy.

Ellery sat on him.

"Tracy Haggard!" Inspector Queen leaned over them, trying to hold the beam of his flash steady. From the other room Nikki was wailing, "What was that? What happened?"

Dr. Haggard was a small, neat, graying man with a clever face; when his eyes opened they were pale and rather glassy.

"This is a fine way to meet again after all these years, Tracy," growled the Inspector. "What's the idea of playing sneak thief in your own house?"

"Mark's box of clues, Dad," murmured Ellery. "Apparently when Tracy Haggard got home, he learned that his brother had blabbed to us about the ten-year-old murder and and had left the clues in here. He's tried to get them back and dispose of them before we can dig too deeply into the crime."

"I don't know why I didn't destroy those guns and dice years ago," said Dr. Tracy Haggard, calmly enough. "Ellery—you are Ellery, aren't you?—would you mind removing the *derrière* from my alimentary canal? You're not exactly a featherweight."

"Then it's true." Ellery did not stir.

"And I attended Jim's funeral and never suspected," said Inspector Queen bitterly. "Tracy, which

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

one of you shot your father? And for God's sake, why?"

"I don't know the answer to either question, Inspector. It's been unholy hell—the four of us living together all these years, knowing one of us did it . . . It sent Mother to her grave." Tracy Haggard tried to rise, failed, and hardened his stomach muscles. "I'm glad she's dead and out of it. And I suppose you saw what it's done to Malvina and Mark. Mark was always a little batty, but Malvina had a promising career in the theater when this happened and she cracked."

"What's going *on* in there?" shrieked Nikki.

"Dr. Haggard, your brother made no bones about the murder of your father," said Ellery. "Does Mark want the truth to come out?"

"When Mother died," said Tracy Haggard, "the three of us split the income of a very large trust fund. By will, if there were only two of us, the income would be that much greater per individual. Mark is always broke—gambling mostly. Does that answer your question?"

"Won't anybody talk?" howled Nikki. "I *can't* come in there!"

"That's why he asked us up here, is it?" snarled the Inspector. "To pin Jim's death on you or Malvina. Mark must feel pretty safe . . ."

"We're going to try to oblige your brother, Doctor." Ellery got off his host and reached for the box of clues.

Dr. Haggard rose, tight-lipped. "In the middle of the night?"

"Dad, get a robe on and throw me mine . . . Why, yes, Doctor. Would you take us to the room where your father was shot to death?"

They trooped downstairs to the nervous accompaniment of the electric lantern, Ellery hugging the box, Nikki in a woolly robe and scuffs and insisting that death would be instantaneous if she were to stay upstairs alone. Toward the rear of the main hall Tracy Haggard paused before a heavy door.

"Understandably, none of us ever goes in here. Nothing's been touched since the night of the crime." Dr. Haggard unlocked the door, threw it open, and stepped aside. "I might add," he said dryly, "that neither Mark nor I has done any hunting since . . . at least with any of these weapons."

The walls of the Gun Room flanking the one door were hung with racks of shotguns, rifles, and small arms. On the other walls were cases containing James Haggard's gambling collection, and a great many larger gambling objects were grouped about the room. A thick coat of dust covered everything.

"Just where was your father's body found?" Ellery murmured.

"Seated behind that desk."

The desk was an elaborate production of inlaid woods, with gunstock-shaped legs and a sheathing of hammered gunmetal. A match-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing chair with a leather seat stood behind it.

"Was he facing this door, Dr. Haggard?"

"Squarely."

"The only door, notice," snapped Inspector Queen, "so the odds are the killer stood in the doorway when he fired the shot. Just one shot, Tracy?"

"Just one shot."

Ellery opened Mark's box and removed the two rusty revolvers. "I see the gunracks are numbered. In which rack, Doctor, were these .38s normally kept?"

"This one came from the rack immediately to the right of the door."

"To the *right* of the door, Doctor? You're positive?"

"Yes, this rack numbered *1*. The other .38 was kept in the rack immediately to the left of the door. This one here, the rack numbered *6*."

"Gun Exhibit A, right of door, rack number 1. Gun Exhibit B, left of door, rack number 6." Ellery frowned. "And it must have been done by one of those two guns, Mark said . . . These ruby dice. Doctor—what did they have to do with the murder?"

"Caligula's dice? We found them in Dad's hand."

"In his *hand?*" exclaimed Nikki. "I didn't really believe your brother when he said that—"

"My examination of his body indicated that Dad lingered a few minutes before dying. You'll notice that one of the wall cases behind the chair is open and empty. That's where the Emperor's Dice, as Dad used to call them, were displayed. When the killer left, Dad must have managed to reach up, open the case, and take out the ruby dice. Then he died."

"But why would he do a thing like that?" asked Nikki.

"Dad had police training. He was leaving a clue to his killer's identity. But we never could figure out whom the dice indicated. They'd been a gift from all three of us."

"Seems like an awfully peculiar anniversary gift to one's parents," Nikki said coldly.

"The dice were for Dad. We gave Mother a ruby pendant."

"Well, I don't get it," the Inspector said irritably. "Clues, ruby dice, emperors! Ellery, can you make anything out of this hash?"

"Let's hope he won't," said Dr. Haggard. "I could kill Mark for this stunt—"

"The way you killed your father, Dr. Haggard?" asked Nikki.

Tracy Haggard smiled. "Shows how insidious Mark's little propaganda scheme is." He shrugged and disappeared in the black hall.

The Inspector and Nikki were staring into the darkness when Ellery said abruptly, "You and Nikki go to bed."

"What are you going to do?" asked his father.

"Stay down here," said Ellery,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rolling the historic dice between his palms, "until I throw a natural."

Malvina Haggard screamed on and off for the remainder of the night, and the angry voices of the brothers raised in bitter argument penetrated to the Gun Room; but from that room there was no sound but the sound of rattling bones, as if the bimillennial ghost of the gambling emperor himself had returned to dice with Ellery.

And finally, at the first smudge of the cold and streaming dawn, the sound stopped, and Ellery came upstairs and methodically roused the household, inviting them all—even the demented woman—to join him on the scene of the old crime. Something in his manner quieted Malvina, and she drifted downstairs with the others docilely.

They took places around the desk in the dusty Gun Room, Mark viciously alive, Malvina somnolent, the doctor suspended watchfully, and Nikki and Inspector Queen trying to contain their excitement.

"The case," announced Ellery, "is solved."

Mark laughed.

"Damn you, Mark!" That was his brother.

Malvina began to croon a wailing tune, smiling.

"I've been throwing these ruby dice for hours," continued Ellery, "with the most surprising result." He shook the dice briskly in his cupped right hand and rolled them out on the desk.

"Nine," said Tracy Haggard. "What's surprising about that?"

"Not merely nine, Dr. Haggard. A 3 and a 6."

"Well, that's nine!"

Ellery rolled again.

"Eleven. Remarkable!"

"Not merely eleven, Dr. Haggard—a 5 and a 6." And Ellery rolled a third time. "And there's seven—a 1 and a 6. Never fails."

"What never fails?" asked Nikki.

"The 6, my pet. I've made hundreds of rolls while you were tossing around upstairs, and while one of these dice behaves with self-respecting variability, the other comes up 6 every time."

"Crooked! Loaded!" said Inspector Queen. "Who'd you say these dice used to belong to?"

"According to Mark, to Gaius Caesar, better known as Caligula, Emperor of Rome from 37 to 41 A.D. And it may well be true, because Caligula was one of history's most distinguished dicing cheats."

"And what does all this mean, Ellery?" asked Mark Haggard.

"Your father left these dice as a clue to the one of you who shot him. There are two dice, there were two .38 revolvers. Theory: The dice were meant by your father to refer to those two revolvers. But we now find that one of these dice is 'loaded'—your word, Dad—while the other is not. Conclusion: Jim Haggard meant to convey the message that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the murderer loaded one of these revolvers."

"Wonderful," said Mark Haggard.

"Ridiculous," said Tracy Haggard. "Of course he loaded one of them! But which one?"

"The loaded die," explained Ellery, "always turns up at the number 6, and one of the revolvers comes from a gunrack numbered 6. It seems obvious that the revolver associated with the number 6 was the one the murderer 'loaded' . . . in other words, the one the murderer chose to fire the fatal bullet into Jim Haggard."

"And a fat lot of good that does," sneered Tracy Haggard. "How can knowing which of the two .38s killed Dad possibly tell you which one of us murdered him?"

"In which direction in relation to the door," inquired Ellery, "is rack number 6 located?"

"The rack to the left of the doorway," the Inspector said slowly. "To the *left* . . ."

"Killer opens door, to his right is a rack with a .38, to his left a rack with a .38. We now know he chose the .38 from the left-hand rack. What kind of person, when he has a choice of either side, automatically chooses an object to his left side? Why, a left-handed person, of course. And that pins the murder on . . ." Ellery stopped.

"Just marvelous," gloated the Inspector. "How this boy of mine comes through! Eh, Nikki?"

"Every time!" said Nikki worshipfully.

"And that pins the job on which one, son?" The Inspector rubbed his palms together.

"It was *supposed* to pin the crime on Malvina," said Ellery, "who held the candle prominently aloft in her left hand when she greeted us—as commented on by Miss Nikki Porter, aloud—whereas the brothers conscientiously demonstrated by various actions during the night that they're both right-handed. Unfortunately, gentlemen and ladies, I'm going to prove a disappointment to you. Aside from a number of tremendous, not to say laughable, improbabilities in the plot, there was one enormous flaw."

"Plot? Flaw?" spluttered Inspector Queen.

The brothers glared. Even Malvina's clouded intelligence seemed shocked to clarity by Ellery's tone.

"I was told," murmured Ellery, "that the ruby dice were a gift to Jim Haggard on the occasion of Mr. and Mrs. Haggard's ruby wedding anniversary—"

"Sure they were, Ellery," said the Inspector. "You saw the inscription in the case yourself!"

"And you told me, Dad, that you'd been best man at your old friend Jim Haggard's wedding forty years ago. You even mentioned the date—1911."

"Yes, but I don't see," began his father doubtfully.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You don't? How long ago was Jim Haggard murdered?"

"Ten years ago, Ellery," said Nikki. "That's what they said."

"Married forty years ago, died ten years ago—so Jim Haggard could have been married no longer than thirty years at the time of his death. But ruby weddings commemorate which anniversary? Don't strain yourselves—ruby wedding is the *fortieth*. I must therefore inquire," said Ellery politely, "how Mr. and Mrs. Haggard could have been presented with gifts commemorating forty years of marriage if when Mr. Haggard died he'd only been married thirty years.

"No answer being forthcoming, I must conclude that the error in mathematics lies in the figures surrounding Mr. Haggard's 'death'; and this is confirmed by the dice, which these two innocent eyes saw in their gold case, dear children, proving that your parents celebrated an anniversary—their fortieth—this very year. So I'm delighted to announce—as if you didn't know it—that your parents are very much alive, my friends, and that the whole thing has been a hoax! You lied, Mark. You lied, Tracy. And Malvina, your performance as Ophelia completely vindicates Mark's judgment that you had a promising career on the stage.

"And *you*, my worthy father." Inspector Queen started. "You ought to apply for an Equity card yourself! Didn't you tell me emotionally that you attended Jim Haggard's funeral ten years ago? So you're one of this gang, too . . . and so are you, Nikki, with your screams and your squeals and the dramatic way in which you pointed out for my benefit the crucial fact that Malvina is left-handed."

There was a vast silence in Jim Haggard's Gun Room.

"All cooked up," said Ellery cheerfully. "The wild night ride, the prevailing lunacy, the lights that failed so atmospherically, the carefully deposited dust in the Gun Room, and all the rest of it cooked up by my own father, in collusion with his precious pals, the Haggard family! Object: Apparently to lead me to deduce, from the herrings strewn across the trail, that Malvina killed her father. Then Jim Haggard could pop out of whatever closet he's hiding in with dear Cora and show me up for the gullible fathead I presumably am. My own father! Not to mention my faithful amanuensis. Reason totters and whimpers: Why? I restored her to her throne when I remembered the date."

Ellery grinned. "Yesterday was the last day of March. Which makes today," and Ellery applied his outspread hand to the end of his nose and, using his thumb as a pivot, gently waved his celebrated fingers in their petrified direction, *"April Fool!"*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There's no mystery about the great outdoors—if you are well prepared.

CAMPING JOURNAL and FISHERMAN are two high-quality magazines that help you plan successful camping and fishing trips. They bring you all that is up-to-date on equipment, techniques, safety, where to go, what to take.

Have *more fun* this year, with FISHERMAN and CAMPING JOURNAL. Both are on sale now at your newsstand. 75¢ each.

★

CLASSIFIED

Rates $1.00 per Word

RARE BOOKS

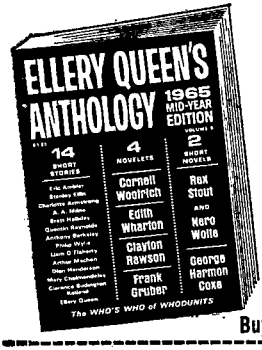
Out of print mysteries? Our specialty. Aardvarks Book Detectives, Box 1749, Orlando, Fla. 32802

FREE Mystery Fiction book lists. Held, 1152 Kensington, Buffalo, N.Y. 14215

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

I made $40,000.00 Year by Mailorder! Helped others make money! Start with $10.00—Free Proof. Torrey, Box 3566-T, Oklahoma City 6, Okla.

FREE Book "990 Successful, Little-Known Businesses." Fascinating! Work home! Plymouth-811-Y, Brooklyn 4, N. Y.



For the best in mystery reading

ELLERY QUEEN'S
MID-YEAR 1965 ANTHOLOGY
$1 per copy

Buy your copy at your newsstand for $1.25—or use coupon below

ELLERY QUEEN'S ANTHOLOGY / 505 PARK AVE. / NEW YORK, N. Y. 10022

Please send me_____copies of ELLERY QUEEN'S MID-YEAR 1965 ANTHOLOGY—Edition No. 9. I am enclosing $1 for each copy ($1.25 outside U.S.A.).

Name _____
(Please print)

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BEST MYSTERIES OF THE MONTH

recommended by ANTHONY BOUCHER

For today's spy-impassioned audience: Johannes Mario Simmel's IT CAN'T ALWAYS BE CAVIAR, translated by James Cleugh (Doubleday, $5.95), an overlong (207,000 words!) but cleverly outrageous satire on espionage, with a noble dividend of grand-manner cooking; and Eric Ambler's TO CATCH A SPY (Atheneum, $4.50), an intelligent and tasteful anthology of the past 40 years of the spy story, with critical commentary worthy of fiction's prime spy-master.

★★★★ **THE PERFECT MURDER, *by H. R. F. Keating*** (Dutton, $3.95)

First U.S. hardcover appearance of one of England's wittiest and most adroit new novelists: a first-rate puzzle for Inspector Ghote, Bombay C.I.D., plus a deeply sympathetic study of the New India.

★★★★ **THE FUGITIVE PIGEON, *by Donald E. Westlake*** (Random, $3.95)

Mad chase, through all of New York's boroughs, of The Syndicate after an accidental and innocent victim makes a wildly delightful tale of pure escape.

★★★★ **THE GIRL NOBODY KNOWS, *by Mark McShane*** (Crime Club, $3.50)

The author of SEANCE ON A WET AFTERNOON again asserts himself as a fresh and disturbing creator of new suspense situations.

★★★ **COTTON COMES TO HARLEM, *by Chester Himes*** (Putnam's, $4.50)

Jones and Johnson, the terrors of Negro detection, return in another grim guignol murder-farce, with disquieting overtones.

★★★ **THE TURRET ROOM, *by Charlotte Armstrong*** (Coward-McCann, $4.50)

Fine taut psychological melodrama within tight family group, such as only Armstrong can spin.

John Creasey's charming and skilled gentleman-adventurer, the Hon. Richard (The Toff) Rollinson, so long neglected in America, has already appeared this year in three U.S. first editions: MODEL FOR THE TOFF (1957; Pyramid R-1134, 50¢), THE TOFF AND THE STOLEN TRESSES (1958; Walker, $3.50) and LEAVE IT TO TOFF (1963; Pyramid R-1121, 50¢).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DEPARTMENT OF "FIRST STORIES"

This is the 275th "first story" to be published by Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine . . . A beautifully written, sensitive and moving story by a new writer of tremendous promise . . .

The author was born in New York City 37 years ago, but he has spent most of his life in New Jersey. He is a graduate of Princeton (B.A.) and of Columbia (M.A.), and for 13 years he was on the faculty of The Lawrenceville School, where he taught history. He decided to leave the academic life because the urge to write finally proved irresistible; at the time EQMM purchased his "first story," he had an ambitious novel "in progress."

We sincerely hope that Mr. Thompson does not forsake the mystery field—and sends us another of his perceptive and illuminating stories soon . . .

THE NIGHT FRIENDS

by JULIAN F. THOMPSON

SANDY'S EYELIDS FLICKERED, THEN flew open, and in the instant before they admitted light and color and shape, the pain and the memory tumbled in, and his arms flexed at his sides and his knees came up higher, toward his stomach. He focused then, and saw the room, his room—the maple bureau and the English bike and the picture of the clipper ship heeling over the wind; and that, at least, was good, so he closed his eyes and relaxed a little and rolled onto his other side.

But the new position woke up the pain, and it growled and leaped and clawed, and his hand slid out of the smooth private world of his own white sheets and found the thick turban of bandage and the place where his head hurt most, above the ear. He groaned and turned back again, trying to escape the pain, and the memory, and his hands reached the bedposts and clenched on them. The bed—yes, the bed. Maybe the bed could take him away.

It had before, so many, many times. The bed had been the ocean, and he was a deep-sea diver, tucking up his legs and somersaulting into the depths—down, down, down beneath the covers to the dark world below, holding his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

breath, relying on touch to retrieve the treasure, and then somersaulting again to push off the footboard, legs straight, lungs bursting, heading for the surface and the fresh air, and the crowds waiting to applaud him.

But most often the bed was a sort of space-ship, with its controls cleverly concealed in the knobs on the headboard where Mother and Nan could never find them. Only *he* knew the secrets of his bed, and at night he could lift off alone, up and out the window, to the far world above. There was so much for a good man to do—a good man and his friends. The friends were a merry lot: the man who had come to fix the pilot light in the stove, and the cheerful, round-faced boy who had helped him when Sandy's hat blew off, laughing and whooping down Seventy-fifth Street, one windy day in March.

There were others, too, friends of *those* friends, who were always glad to come along and do things with him; he'd pick them up wherever they lived, hovering outside their bedroom windows for an instant, and help them across into the bed. The bed was plenty big enough for all, and even when it was a bit crowded, it was good to feel his friends beside him, shoulder to shoulder, ready for Sandy's orders and for high adventure.

And what adventures they had! Sometimes he just *had* to tell about them—tell Mother or Nan about the places they'd been to and the things that had happened: the good things like the ambush of the foreign enemy that had landed on the coast of Florida; or the sad things like the time his sister—the tiny blonde sister he'd found one night wandering, homeless, down at the river—like the time she'd caught that terrible disease and died, even though he and all the other friends had given her blood and put cool washcloths on her head.

Mother and Nan didn't seem to like the stories much; usually they shushed him, and told him, long before the end, not to be silly. But a few times Mother took him downtown in a taxi and let him tell them to a man who liked to listen to stories, and they had nice talks about them, and the man always wanted to hear some more.

This morning the bed didn't seem to work, though, and when the pain eased up—he could still feel its heartbeat, right behind his eyes—he had only the memory of the day, yesterday, and he thought about it and waited for Nan to come and call him a sleepy-head and tell him it was time to get up for breakfast. He'd tell *her* about yesterday then, just the way it happened, and maybe, for once, she'd believe him, and be a friend. When he was telling it, he'd try not to cry—they didn't like him to cry the way he had when he told them

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

about his sister dying—but he didn't know if he could help it.

He'd cried when he told Mother, and she hadn't believed him, not at all. He'd waked up in the middle of the night—yes, just last night! —and Mother had been there, right by the bed, sitting and looking down at him. He'd remembered it all in little pieces then, and added them, one to another, to make the story. But Mother had smiled, and said "No," and told him how *she* thought it was. She was nice, too, right until he remembered the last part—how he'd seen *her* there, wrapped in the towel. Then she'd gotten angry, and told him to stop being silly, right that minute, and did he want a spanking?

He had said no, and had stopped and been quiet. It was bad to talk back to Mother, especially when she pressed her lips tight together and said words slowly and carefully, from way back in her mouth. She was strong, and younger than other mothers seemed to be; sometimes that made him proud of her, she could do things so well. Like tennis. He used to watch her play, in the summer, when they'd gone to the country and belonged to the Club; she'd parted her blonde hair in the middle, for tennis, and braided it into two little pigtails, tied with pink ribbon. Other mothers wore white skirts down to their knees, and had marbled white legs, but Mother was tan and smooth and wore shorts, like a boy.

She'd been tennis champion of the Club—she had a silver cigarette box they gave her for it—and whenever she played, a lot of the men would take canvas chairs from the terrace or sit on the lawn to watch her. She would never let a ball go, and call "Nice shot!" No, she'd run and stretch and get to it somehow, and then, after the point, she'd joke with the men, taking deep breaths to get her wind back, leaning against the wire netting at the end of the court, with her fingers clenched around the wire, above her head. They laughed at her jokes, too, and clapped whenever she made a good shot.

A long time ago, when Sandy was very little, his father had used to come and watch her play, and the other men would talk to his father about their business, and his books and travels, and what a good tennis player Mother was. But later on they stopped talking to his father so much, as if he wasn't their friend any more, and soon, whenever his father sat down on the lawn to watch, some of the other men would get up, and stretch, and stroll away somewhere else.

His father would narrow his eyes and watch them go, and sometimes say their names, softly to himself, with a question at the end, like "Tom?" or "Stanley, eh?"—just like that. Once he asked his father why the men didn't want to see his mother play any more, and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his father had laughed, with a kind of a barking noise. "They've seen her play already," he said. "Plenty." Which seemed like a funny thing to say, because a tennis match was always different, no matter how many times you've seen the players.

Thinking of his father made him squeeze his eyes tight shut, but all that did was quicken the heartbeat of the pain, and the hot wetness escaped anyway, down over his nose and onto his cheek and from there to the pillow, spotting it gray. It was only yesterday, after all, and he remembered much too well.

He'd gotten up on his own and later than usual because it was Thursday, Nan's day off, and his mother slept late and never waked him. She said he could get his own breakfasts on Thursday, as a treat, and that's what he'd been doing yesterday, when she found him in the pantry.

"Guess what, Sandy?" she had said. "Guess who's making the scene today?" His mother always talked like that, saying things differently from the way other people did. His father had a word for the way she talked; it must have been a bad word, because he said it softly and asked her not to be it. "Vulgar" was the word. "Don't be vulgar, Jane," he used to say.

But yesterday, Sandy had been interested in the tone of her voice, not in what she said. She had a special sound in her voice when she was going to say something about his father, and she had that tone then—disgusted, sort of. He was right.

"Your father!" she'd said. "Himself!" She put both fists on her hips and just stood there, looking down at him, making him wait. She had on this thing she called a "painwahr," or something, that was made of white material, like they put in curtains, and it hung down from her neck in a lot of folds so that only when she moved quickly or bent over could you tell that she didn't have anything on underneath. He dropped his eyes so he didn't have to see her.

"Not a word for months, and then the phone rings and here he is. Just like that." She snapped her fingers. "It's you he's come to see, of course, and you have to. Only good thing is, he's leaving tomorrow for Somaliland or some Godforesaken place, so that's that for months."

Raising on her toes, she had pirouetted toward the door, making the gown flow around her. "I won't stay to greet him, thanks very much; Uncle Hal's coming in a minute. Make him get you back by supper; he has to. Maybe he'll take you to a movie or something." She came back to kiss him on the cheek and press his head into her front. "Be a good boy. And tell him how sorry I am to miss him." She swept out of the pantry, laughing.

He had sat for a minute, staring

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

into his bowl—at the soggy brown islands floating in the sea of milk—and then he started to eat, smiling, with good appetite. It was three years ago when his father had stopped living with them for good; Sandy had been six. The night of the day his father had left was the only other time he remembered his mother sitting by his bed. That night, *she'd* been crying, and she'd said his father had threatened to kill her. Yes, she'd cried, even though she seemed more angry than sad, and she'd asked Sandy things that didn't make any sense—like how could she be married to a traveling typewriter, and did his father think she would spend her life sitting in the Park?

None of that had made any sense. People didn't marry typewriters; they married other people that they got in love with somehow, when they were older. Typewriters were *things* and you used things and could like them for being pretty or because they could do something real good, but you didn't get in love with them or marry them. And as for "sitting in the Park"—well, Nan did that. What did sitting in the Park have to do with *her?*

Anyway, by the next night his mother had been back to normal and didn't sit by his bed or ask him questions. When he'd started for bed—coming up the stairs with Nan—he'd heard his mother in the library, laughing over something that Uncle Hal had said. He didn't know Uncle Hal too well then, but he did later. "Roger"—that was his father—"Roger," Uncle Hal said, "lives in another world. Let's don't tell him what he's missing." That didn't seem so funny to Sandy, but they'd both laughed at it—laughed at it a lot.

After his father had moved away, his mother had wanted to "get divorced," like Gordon's parents had gotten, but they weren't that. They were "separated" which was less than divorced, to hear Mother talk about it, and not anywhere near so good. As far as Sandy was concerned, it was a lot better: Gordon, who hardly ever saw his father either, didn't like him at all, and he *loved* his father and wanted to keep on loving him. So the last time he saw his father, he'd begged him not to "get divorced," and his father had told him not to worry, that he never would. And his father had said, too, that some day Sandy might live with him, but that right now he had to go away a lot, and write books, and have his adventures and make a lot of money. It wouldn't be forever, his father said, and Sandy had to be content with that, and the occasional days his father came to see him. Like yesterday.

His mother had gone off with Uncle Hal, just the way she said she would, and he was left alone in the house, waiting for his fa

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ther. In the last three years Uncle Hal had been around a lot, at first mostly for cocktails or for dinner. He always made a fuss over Sandy, ruffling his hair and calling him "pal," and he kept coming back, for lunch and even for breakfast sometimes, until it almost seemed he *lived* in the house.

Uncle Hal had a red car, very small and uncomfortable, and he laughed all the time, running his hand up the side of his face where the stubble was thick and black and you could hear hairs scratching against his hand. About once a week he'd bring a present and Sandy would know what his mother would say: "Oh, Hal, you *shouldn't*" and "Isn't that *terrific*, Sandy?" He'd try to smile and say, "Thank you," and Uncle Hal would rumple his hair some more and say, "Think nothing of it, old pal," and then tell him to run upstairs and play, that he and his mother wanted to talk now. Usually he said that, although sometimes he'd try to play *with* him, during cocktails, rocking him on his knee or lifting him up and turning him upside down, or pretending to test his grip or feel his muscles.

That was one thing about Uncle Hal: he always had to have his hands on someone. When he sat beside his mother on the couch, he'd usually be picking at her knee with his fingertips, tickling, sort of, and if she was standing up beside him, he'd reach out and put his hand right on her behind. She didn't seem to like that, because she was always pushing his hand away, just like *he* wanted to do when Uncle Hal started to maul him.

His mother used to ask him about Uncle Hal, at first. Did he like him? He *is* nice, now, isn't he? Like that. He'd mumbled and nodded and after a while she stopped asking him his opinion. He gave it freely to his friends at night, though: Uncle Hal was not nice; he was bad and dangerous and some time he and his friends would get him and send him away, somewhere, forever and ever.

Waiting for his father, he'd played with some soldiers Uncle Hal had given him and had a battle between them and some other soldiers he'd bought with his allowance; but when he heard the car outside, he stopped the battle, and he remembered running—running for the door to open it before his father had gotten to the top of the steps.

At first it had been hard to think of things to say, and it seemed there was a long time in which nothing happened at all, while he waited for his father to find something to say, or something to ask about. Most grownups talked all the time, on and on, saying one dull thing after another; but his father had never been that way. He'd be quiet for a long time, maybe taking out his pipe, and rubbing it between his palms, or

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

twisting the stem just right; then he'd fill it with tobacco out of a yellow pouch, little by little, as if he were selecting just the flakes he wanted, and the right number of them, too.

His father had done that yesterday—he must have, because when he began to talk at last, his voice had come out of a big cloud of smoke, the voice soft and gentle and really *caring,* and his stories were like a magic carpet, floating away to far places and strange, wonderful people. And slowly he'd realized that his father was a *friend,* the best of the friends: the kindest, the wisest, the bravest of them all. With his father in the group there was no good they couldn't do.

"I know what," his father had said, all of a sudden. He'd gotten up out of the chair and glided over to the window. His father was tall, and he always sat in a sort of tangle, legs and arms crossed and twined around each other; but when he untangled and stood up to move, it was as if he didn't have any bones any more; everything just smoothed out and flowed into action. "Let's get some bathing suits and ride out to the country. To our old place. You don't think your mother's sold it, do you?"

Sandy thought she hadn't, though he really didn't know, and in any case he suddenly wanted to go there so badly that he would've said anything. To go to the country place again! All the best times belonged there; he'd loved the country better than anywhere—his private place back under the bushes, and the brook where he and his father caught the tadpole that they left in Mother's bathtub, and even the tumble-down garage where they'd taken turns at the handle of the old-fashioned ice cream freezer. It was July already and he hadn't been to the country once all summer, even for a drive, and the thought of the soft brownish-green of the lake water, and of the shadowy paths—well, it was just *like* his father to come up with such a great idea!

So they had gone, hand in hand down the steps of the new-old brownstone house into the baking soot-filled sunshine of the city street. His father had stopped at a store and bought them each a pair of bathing trunks with wriggling black and white stripes. "We'll be zebras," he'd said, "the first zebras ever to swim in a Connecticut lake. Thank heaven we'll have privacy up there. I wouldn't want just any old person to come across a couple of wild zebras. My gosh," he laughed, "wouldn't your mother love these trunks?"

The ride out had been sheer joy, like an old story, well-loved and well-remembered. They hadn't changed anything at all: the smooth ribbons of parkway shadowed, suddenly, by arching fieldstone bridges; the high-crowned

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

country roads with their sudden dips (his father always said, "Thank you, ma'am," whenever they hit one); and, finally, their own dirt road, Mohawk-crested down the middle.

His father had parked right by the house, in the abundant shade of an old maple, and he, with a shout, had burrowed into the bushes next to the porch, where his old hideout had been. His father had called after him, yes, that was it; they could change by the car, and he'd go on ahead, down to the lake, and set up the picnic lunch he'd brought. "See you down there," he'd called. "You remember the path, don't you? Just watch out for the poison ivy. Zebras can get it real bad, you know."

Sandy had yelled back, "okay," and gone into the bushes, carefully parting the thorny bayberry stems and peering into the shadows of the cave he and his father had once made. And there, right in the farthest back part, was his old cookie tin, the safe where he'd kept his best treasures—knife, slingshot, and even, sometimes, a cookie or two that he'd smuggled away from the table and saved against a time of need. The tin was empty, of course, and its silvered edges were frosted with rust; but it had made him remember that he'd had his first friends there, just before they moved away. He'd shared his cookies with those friends, and they never complained or were any different to him, no matter what. In the worst of times they'd just grin, and tighten their belts, and go right on being friends.

After a while he crawled out of the cave and walked back to the car. He'd undressed slowly, feeling sort of funny, but good, to be undressing right outdoors like that, and the sun, filtering through the maple leaves, had felt warm on his white skin as he tugged his way into the tight elastic of the zebra trunks. When he was in them, and feeling nice and good sort of, he trotted toward the path, suddenly impatient to see the lake, and smiling—he was sure he'd been smiling—as he thought of all the games they'd play and the fun he and his father would have.

The path began in back of where the flower garden had been—or the vegetable garden, maybe—and ran through some woods, on and down to the lake. The woods were creeping into the path, but he found his feet remembering and he walked quickly, stepping over the new windfalls and swaying away from the bushes that spilled into his way. The trees thinned out a lot as the path sloped down toward the lake, and there, on the slope, he had heard the voices, angry voices, and the noise, a dull thwack!—like a baseball hitting hard into the pocket of a glove.

The trees and taller bushes were gone then, and he'd had a moment's glimpse of the scene: his father

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

kneeling, and making little grabbing gestures with his hands, while the red stain came down his face to his chest; and Uncle Hal, a wild hairy caveman of an Uncle Hal, standing over him with a club, a dead branch off a tree, which he raised in both hands, like a man driving stakes into the ground, ready to strike again. And his mother, sitting a little way off, on the beach, with a towel wrapped tight around her, as if she were cold, very, very cold.

Sandy had tried to shout, he remembered, but the shout had caught in his throat, right in the back of it where your throat goes up and down when you're going to throw up, and then he'd found himself running hard, down the path. He remembered eyes coming up to him, and then the thing had struck his toe, hard, and his body had gone out of control, staggering to the right, off the path, and then sailing almost, into the underbrush. He had tried to reach out but he couldn't grab hold of anything, and then something exploded in his head, and there was just a blank black nothing.

The nothing finally lifted; he thought he remembered a familiar face, under wispy gray hair, and the touch of good hands. Then there was a sting, and soothing voices, and nothing again . . .

Sandy concentrated on the pale blue eyes as he told his story. Nan *had* to believe, she *had* to, so he told it slowly, trying not to cry, even at the most awful part. But her eyes wouldn't stay with his; they wandered away, around the room, and as she clucked and tut-tutted he could feel the unbelieving building up. When she spoke at last, at the end, he knew that she was not a friend, and he wondered if he'd ever find one, ever.

"Just listen a bit now, Sandy," she said. "Listen to Nan. She ever tell you a lie? Here's the truth of it, for sure. You're alone in the house, like you say, and you hear the car pull up outside, your father's car, isn't it? You run then, fast as ever you can, out of the living room and into the hall. Thinking about going to the country, you are, your head buzzin' with plans for it; not out of the city all summer, and wild to go. And you run so fast in your slippery leather shoes that you slip and tumble, right by that big oak table in the hall.

"You give your head an awful bang, and there you lay, dead to the world, till your mother comes back and finds you. But all that time you're laying there, your poor brain's still working away. The last thing you're thinking about, when you hit your head, is your father and going with him to the country, so you make up a story about it the way you always do—a bad story 'cause you're hurt and upset, and when you wake up it's like a dream

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is sometimes, so real you think it really happened."

She smoothed her white uniform skirt and smiled down at the boy. She had told Mrs. Dennison it would be a hard job to convince him, poor troubled lamb. She'd seen head injuries before, in her time. Best just to tell the story, over and over, and take their mind off things.

"Why, you know what, Sandy?" she asked. He stared back at her dully. "Your Uncle Hal was here already this morning. For breakfast. He asked all about you—he was that concerned, he was. Now he wouldn't do that if he'd done what you said he done, would he? And another thing. Your mother told me your father phoned last night, because he hadn't gotten any answer when he rang at the door, and that he came over to see you when you were sleeping because of the medicine the doctor gave you. And wait'll you see the present your father left! He was *so* disappointed that he couldn't talk to you before his plane left, your mother said. So let's get into your clothes now, like a good boy. Then we'll go and have some breakfast and see what your father brought."

Take his mind off it, she thought —yes, that's the best thing.

Sandy moved through the day, a suspicious, captive little animal. He didn't talk much and he didn't cry; he just did as he was told, answering in a quiet, hopeless little voice.

Toward bedtime he became more cheerful; he knew what he must try to do. He'd get into bed and see if he could find a friend, any one of them; a friend would be able to help.

His heart pounded as he began to shut out the world around him, and to concentrate on the magic of the bed. He heard Nan moving in the bathroom, running his bath, and all of a sudden it wasn't a bath at all. It was a waterfall, plummeting into a mountain pool, a pool that he would swim in with his friend after he told the story and was believed.

His clothes fell around him as he stood, smiling dreamily at the big mirror on the wall; his fingers brushed his bare chest, then his sides and his thighs, and he walked toward the pool, hearing his friend splashing beside it. Now he would be believed. A friend, a friend!

He smiled again and walked confidently through the door—a slight, naked figure, his pale skin mottled by the red rash, and his fingernails digging absently at his stomach where the small pink blisters were already starting to form.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DEPARTMENT OF "FIRST STORIES"

This is the 276th "first story" to be published by Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine . . . An impressive "first"—emotional, sensitive, understanding—a story with a definite and satisfying "shape" to it . . .

At the time Mrs. Scharmer wrote "A Row of Tulips," she was in her mid-forties, married 25 years, "mother of four and grandmother of one." She has the "usual small-town interests"—church, community affairs, and bowling. She had (still quoting from the author's letter) "a very ordinary background, the kind any one of our neighbors might have, but with one exception: I have an itchy imagination."

Mrs. Scharmer has always had the urge to write. She hasn't been, as she expressed it, "too faithful to that urge"—because she "had a lot of living to do; but the pressing need to put words on paper has always been with me."

She "warns" us that EQMM "will see much more" of her writing. So be it! We would like nothing better than to publish more of this talented newcomer's work.

A ROW OF TULIPS

by BARBARA P. SCHARMER

She walked slowly. Not so much because it was uphill, but more because there was a warm happy magic in the Indian Summer afternoon. The sunlight, filtered through leaves already turning russet and gold, made dappled patterns on the dusty road.

She took a deep breath, letting the smoky acrid odor send a strange exhilaration through her tired body. It was as if she had scooped this one moment from the frantic maelstrom of time and now held it close to her heart—one moment when there were no demands, no pressures, no pushing from anyone.

At the top of the hill she stopped and leaned against a big maple tree. Below her the town spread out like some gigantic toy village. Her eyes slowly traced the one main street that curved like a gray ribbon from the white-spired church past the squatty library and the cluster of stores to the bend in the road and the mass of bricks and stones that was the Hospital.

For a moment she frowned, as

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

though finding a scar in the beauty of the scene. For the Hospital, with its iron-barred windows and its high thick wall, was an ugly sight —so unlike the placid little town around it. Yet she knew that without the Hospital to provide jobs, there probably wouldn't be any town.

The awkward package under her arm slipped a little and she shifted it to a more comfortable position. Through the stiff brown paper she could feel the hard lumps of the tulip bulbs, and she hugged them to her, feeling the physical hurt as they pressed into her thin bones and relishing the pain.

Five years she had waited—five long years of watching summers burst gloriously into autumn and fade into drab gray winters. Each year Bert had promised that she could plant a row of tulips at the edge of the brook. But five springs had come softly—pregnantly fragile springs that ate into her heart with their expectancy—and she still had no tulips.

Bert's refusals had always sounded reasonable enough. The first year it had been the pup. Even now, remembering, she could feel the shaggy warmth of the mongrel pup's body in her arms and see the naked plea for love in his brown eyes.

When she had asked to keep the pup, Bert had been awfully angry. He had yelled at her and called her Mildred instead of Millie. He did that only when he was real upset. And only when she had promised that it would cost nothing extra to feed the pup had Bert reluctantly permitted her to keep him.

It was nice to have the pup around. Of course, as Bert explained, she couldn't plant tulip bulbs that year because the pup would probably just dig them up. But she didn't mind, really. Then one wintry day Bert had come in and said he had made a good deal with a man from the next county who needed a dog, and Bert had picked up the pup and taken him away.

She didn't like to think about that day.

The next year it was the paint. Daily she sat in the creaking rocker by the black cook stove looking at the drab, colorless kitchen walls. Then one day she decided to paint them. She should have spoken to Bert about it, of course, but somehow he always had a way of twisting her ideas so they seemed wrong.

So she had just gone into town and charged a can of paint at the hardware store. It had been fun choosing the color. Not too light, because it would be hard to keep clean; and not too dark, because it would not be cheerful. A nice, pretty shade of light blue—like the summer skies.

The day she painted the kitchen Bert had taken a load of potatoes to market. When he came home, later than usual, she had stood waiting

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for him, proud of her work. And right away she had known that it had been wrong. She had never seen him so angry, and it was nearly a week before he called her Millie again. And of course there were no tulips that year because he had to pay for the paint she had bought so foolishly.

The next three years it had been the same—Bert always found some reason. No matter how hard she tried, she always managed to do some thoughtless thing that would bring Bert's wrath down on her, and again he would deny her the row of tulips she wanted so desperately.

Until this year. This year it had been different. She pushed a straggly strand of hair from her damp brow. A tiny doubt prodded and she frowned. Not that Bert had actually come right out and promised he'd let her plant the bulbs. But on the other hand he hadn't definitely said she *couldn't*. And she had been so very careful all year not to do one wrong thing.

Today, Bert had begun to plow the garden. And the first place he had plowed was the spot beside the brook where she wanted to have the tulips. He had never done that before, so it must be that he meant she could have her row of tulips at last.

The clock in the church spire struck two, the liquid tones sounding loud in the clear air. She felt a sharp twinge of resentment and urgency—resentment of anything that might interrupt this calm happy interlude and urgency of things that had to be done at home.

Reluctantly she pushed herself away from the rough trunk of the tree and started on.

Then another sound cut through the air—a sharp, demanding, piercing sound. She turned again to scan the town, this time to search for the smoke that would tell her where the fire was. But there was no wispy column in sight.

Suddenly her mind seemed to freeze, her whole body go numb. That had not been the fire warning. It had been three loud blasts. They gave that signal only when an inmate of the Hospital had escaped. A dangerous inmate.

For a long moment she held her breath, listening. From the woods ahead came the harsh cry of a bluejay. A bee hummed by lazily, stopping to balance on the very tip of a clover blossom; then it buzzed its zigzagging way across the meadow.

She began to walk fast, the dry dust of the road spurting like tiny wings from the hard impact of her feet.

Again the three loud blasts of the fire whistle cut through the air She started to run. Faster, faster, until the dust trail was one continuous cloud. The danger seemed all around her, waiting for her.

Home. That was the only safe place. She had to get home. Maybe

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

if she took the short cut through the woods she would make it in time. Panic and shortness of breath blurred her vision and she almost missed the turnoff. But once inside the cool dark shelter of the trees she slowed her steps.

Quickly she followed the path, which was slippery in spots and covered with mossy stones. But she was cautious, too, stopping now and then to listen for footsteps, and peering through the bushes and trees with eyes sharpened by fear.

As she approached the little glen that was in the middle of the forest, she slowed even more. Suddenly she pushed herself against a tree, her heart beating wildly. A shadow, darker than the others, was sliding acoss the far corner of the glen.

She watched, hardly breathing, as the shadow hovered there, above the pale green grass, for what seemed a lifetime. Then, slowly, it passed on and blended with the other shadows.

She continued to wait, listening, feeling the veined crusty bark of the tree digging into her flesh. But there was only silence now—a deep, endless silence.

Tentatively she took a step forward, paused, and then throwing caution away, she sped across an open space and down the path on the other side of the glen.

The denseness of the woods was now behind her. Ahead she could see the brook as it sparkled in the sunlight. And across the little wooden footbridge was home. She felt the knot of fear in her stomach begin to dissolve.

Carefully she made her way to the big boulder at the edge of the woods. This was her last haven of refuge. Once she had passed this, she would be in the open.

She stood beside the boulder, waiting for her heart to slow to normal. She could see the rough unpainted boards of the footbridge, blackened from rain and dust. The grass always seemed greener at the edge of the brook, somehow. Now it was waving gently in the bright sun. The little brook made a gurgling splashing sound as it bubbled over the rocks.

She smiled. She was in time. She glanced around and suddenly the black shadow was there again, moving toward her, huge and menacing.

She crouched behind the big boulder, pushing against its cold roughness as though trying to become a part of it. Heavy footsteps sounded, coming closer and closer, and the shadow paused on the path in front of the boulder.

She held her breath, peering out between the fronds of a tall fern. She could see his face now. His square jaw jutted almost angrily below his thin tight mouth. His eyes were searching, carefully, each tree, each stone. As he turned slowly, she could see the heavy muscles bulging in his arms.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The acrid bitter smell of the fern was making her stomach churn. Her foot was hurting where a sharp pebble cut into it. The roughness of the boulder was bruising her face. But she dared not move.

Then, without warning, the black shadow moved away, back into the woods. She listened to the heavy footsteps until they faded away. Then, silently, she stood up, her body twinging with the pain of having been cramped in one position too long. Softly she ran down the path to the bridge.

As her feet touched the boards, the black shadow suddenly loomed over her. She looked over her shoulder and sheer terror made her stumble. Strong arms caught her as she fell. She tried to twist around. And then she couldn't move any more because the strong arms were holding her in a vise-like grip . . .

The Sheriff put the station wagon in gear. His deputy reached for the phone on the dashboard.

"Sound the all clear." The deputy sheriff's voice was tired. Replacing the phone, he took a crumpled pack of cigarettes from his pocket.

"It's a funny thing," the Sheriff said, shaking his head. "Millie's been in the Hospital for forty years. Yet the first place she heads for when she breaks out is her old home. Animal instinct, I guess."

The deputy sheriff turned to look at their prisoner. She sat between the two men in the back seat, her hands and feet tied securely. Her emaciated body seemed to hunch grotesquely, the fingers long and bony and the skin stretched tightly over her cheekbones. Lanky, stringy gray hair hung limply over a scratched and bruised face, and her deepset eyes had a vacant, lost look.

"What was she put away for, anyway?" the deputy sheriff asked curiously.

"Killed her husband." The Sheriff swung into the Hospital grounds. "Just came home from a walk one day and hit him over the head with a shovel as he was planting fodder corn right there next to the brook."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *Detective-story readers are being lost—unnecessarily, in the opinion of the writer—for the simple reason that numerous readers do not understand the genre's technical jargon as it is frequently used by many mystery authors. To correct this deplorable situation, the writer has taken time off from the vital opus on which he is currently stuck in order to define some of these specialized terms and expressions—and thus remove the problem and improve readers' understanding. With no further ado ("goodbye" as spelled by an illiterate Frenchman) I give you this first installment of Gumshoe Glossary ("glossary": the way your eyes get when you read too much of this stuff).*

GUMSHOE GLOSSARY

including some Fishy definitions

by A. C. LAMPREY

A to Z: Contrary to popular opinion, this phrase has nothing to do with the alphabet, but stands for the initials of two smugglers named Asher and Zimmerman who carried on their trade across what is now the Polish-German border, and used their initials to maintain the secrecy necessary for such an operation. It is interesting to note that because they had to sneak past the border guard, which was then composed of members of the dreaded *Gegenseitig Abfürzen Mangelhaft Und Tränсken,* going from A to Z also became known as "running" the G.A.M.U.T.

Adequate Protection: The guard set up to protect the Roman adequates, which were arch-type constructions used for the transportation of water. Arch-types are quite common in detective stories.

Blunt Instrument: A two-stringed trombone invented by one Thomas Blunt, which differs radically from the Sharp Instrument, in that the Blunt Instrument is always in one flat, usually in C Clef. This is why people who live in flats are called Clef dwellers.

Corpus Delicti: There was once a professional egg candler named Giu-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

seppe Delicti, whose ineptness in handling his product led to constant dismissal from his various employments. At last, having reluctantly come to the conclusion that he was not cut out for the job, he joined the military forces.

In the Army, Giuseppe seemed to have found his proper niche, for he quickly rose to the rank of corporal, and was extremely popular with his troops. But Corporal Delicti—or "Corpus," as his men affectionately called him—was not happy. He missed egg candling, even though he realized his clumsiness did not fit him for that vocation.

Then one day he disappeared, and has never been seen since. The superstitious natives, however, claim his spirit still practices his old profession, pointing for evidence to the fact that wherever his spirit passes, eggs mark the spot.

Dilemma: An upset stomach for which the treatment is usually an enigma.

Enthymematic: To my knowledge, this word has appeared only once in a mystery novel, and this has long since been out of print. I believe we can forget this term.

Fraud: Loaded, as used in the expression "fraud with peril." Anyone with a string of perils, of course, is loaded.

Ghoulish: Hungarian bouillabaisse. When served at Yale, it is customary for all students to rise and sing Bouilla-Bouilla. This puts the waiters off baisse.

Garrote: A slang manner of saying "Go away." The usual phrase, in its entirety, is "Garrote here."

Horoscope: A special optical camera used for the projection of monster films. Monster films, of course, require a wide-scream.

Homicide: A location suitable for the construction of a house. This is not to be confused with Homestead, which was an Act of Congress that introduced the Prohibition Law.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Indemnity: In the days of the old West it was quite common for the womenfolk to go to public functions dressed in calico, but more recently the tendency has been for them to go indemnity. The most popular pattern of indemnity is a large check.

Jug: This is one of the most misunderstood words in the Gumshoe Glossary. Because of its use in conjunction with other words to form such combinations as Jug-Head, Jug-Handle, Jug-Eared, etc., people assume it is a prefix. This, of course, is not true. If one goes to the Jug, it is precisely because there has been *no* pre-fix.

Kill: The Anglo-Saxon translation of the French word *quel,* and a murderous translation at that.

Long Arm of the Law: This is usually a carbine as opposed to a revolver, which is a much shorter arm of the law. One seldom sees carbines any more, now that buses have replaced street cars.

Moulage: A famous night club in the Place Pigalle in Paris, as seen from a speeding car.

Nitro: The Paris subway.

Nocturnal: A type of soup made without real turnals, which are the entering gates in the Paris subway. For this reason, Nitro is also occasionally referred to as "soup."

On the Scent: The Scent, one of the loveliest of English rivers, was used in ancient days as a depository for those royal heads which fell under the ax in the Tower of London. Archeologists now recognize the importance of recovering these historic mementos, and for this reason one of the most popular sports in England today is skulling on the Scent.

Peel (Sir Robert): The first British nudist. His followers, because of the color of their skin, have become known as "Coppers."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Quick, Watney, the Needle!: While this phrase has become legend, it is extremely doubtful that Shlock Homes ever said it. It is true that sewing was one of his hobbies, but his most successful garment was a blouse made without a stitch—which was certainly a needleless waist.

Ricochet: An Oriental two-wheeled means of transportation in which the pullers chaise one another.

Scotland Yard: Thirty-five inches.

Star Witness: A reference to Galileo, who had nothing else to watch since in those days watches had not been invented. Clocks, however, had been, and a prime example is the Clockenspiel, which not only told time, but also rang. A descendent, J. Arthur Rang, attempted to dramatize this fact by depicting a slave striking a large platter with a mallet, but when people began referring to him as J. Arthur Mallet, he ceased and desisted.

Testimony: The verification of the authenticity of a gold coin by applying acid to see if it discolors.

Ugly Customer: A person who, for reasons I cannot imagine, insists on purchasing an ugly.

Vampire: The name given to the tallest building in New York City. It has been reliably estimated that if all the floors of this building were laid side by side, it would be the shortest building in New York City.

Well-Armed: The Hindu God Siva, for example. No proper explanation has ever been given for the reason this deity has so many limbs, but it must be assumed they siva useful purpose.

X Marks the Spot: A notation commonly used by dry cleaners to prevent their cleaning the wrong area. While helpful to the cleaners, it wrecks havoc with the customers since X-stains are difficult to remove.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Yeggs: The men who, together with Bacon, were accused of poaching the works of Shakespeare.

Zip-gun: A weapon especially designed for the shooting of members of the Zeta Iota Pi fraternity. People using this weapon should be warned, however, that they may only fire at members when they are on the main body of the fraternity house, since it is illegal to shoot them on the wing.

CURRENT MYSTERY AND SUSPENSE HARDCOVERS

AUTHOR	TITLE	PUBLISHER	PRICE	ON SALE
Armstrong, Charlotte	THE TURRET ROOM	Coward-McCann	$4.50	3/30
Bagby, George	MYSTERIOUSER & MYSTERIOUSER	Doubleday & Company	$3.50	4/2
Ball, John	IN THE HEAT OF NIGHT	Harper & Row	$3.95	4/7
Boland, John	COUNTERPOL	Walker & Company	$3.50	4/9
Browne, Malcolm W.	THE NEW FACE OF WAR	Bobbs-Merrill Co.	$5.00	4/19
Dürrenmatt, Friedrich	FOUR PLAYS	Grove Press	$6.00	4/30
Fair, A. A.	CUT THIN TO WIN	Wm. Morrow & Co.	$3.50	4/7
Fremlin Celia	THE JEALOUS ONE	J. P. Lippincott Co.	$3.50	4/19
Holden, Genevieve	DON'T GO IN ALONE	Doubleday & Co.	$3.50	4/16
Hunt, Kyle	CUNNING AS A FOX	The MacMillan Co.	$3.95	4/12
Keith, Carlton	THE HIDING-PLACE	Doubleday & Co.	$3.50	4/16
King, Terry Johnson	THE NEUTRON BEAM MURDER	Abelard-Schuman Ltd.	$3.50	4/28
Mitchell, Gladys	DEATH OF A DELFT BLUE	London House & Maxwell	$3.95	4/15
Pentecost, Hugh	THE SNIPER	Dodd, Mead & Co.	$3.50	4/5
Peters, Ellis	WHO LIES HERE?	Wm. Morrow & Co.	$3.95	4/28
Peters, Ludovic	OUT BY THE RIVER	Walker & Company	$3.50	4/12
Quentin, Patrick	FAMILY SKELETONS	Random House, Inc.	$3.95	4/6
Spillane, Mickey	BLOODY SUNRISE	E. P. Dutton & Co.	$3.50	4/14
van Gulik, R.	THE WILLOW PATTERN	Chas. Scribner's Sons	$3.50	4/26
Woolrich, Cornell	THE TEN FACES OF CORNELL WOOLRICH	Simon & Schuster	$3.50	4/9

CURRENT MYSTERY AND SUSPENSE PAPERBACKS

AUTHOR	TITLE	PUBLISHER	PRICE	ON SALE
Disney, Doris Miles	THE LAST STRAW	Popular Library	$ .50	4/6
Eberhart, Mignon G.	UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN	Popular Library	$ .50	4/20
Marlowe, Dan J.	DEATH DEEP DOWN	Gold Medal (Orig.)	$ .40	3/30
Thompson, Jim	THE KILLER INSIDE ME	Gold Medal	$ .40	3/30

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The question was really very simple—almost too simple: Just how did the clever spy transmit vital information? When top experts were baffled, they called in Rand who was known to have a knack for this kind of problem.

Can you beat Rand to the solution?

THE SPY WHO DID NOTHING

by EDWARD D. HOCH

"ALL RIGHT," RAND SAID, "TELL ME about it."

Hastings carefully lit a cigarette and seemed to ponder where to begin. Finally he leaned back in his chair and said, quite simply, "We have a spy in the Department."

"Are you sure?"

"I'm sure."

Rand studied the balding man with renewed interest. He'd known Hastings on a professional basis for five years, and he'd come to respect the man's keen mind and quick decisiveness. It was no accident that Hastings was the only man under 50 to be head of an important department—the only man in the entire branch cleared for top-secret duty.

"You want me to spot him?" Rand asked.

"I know the spy's identity."

"You *know?*"

"Knowing and proving are two different things, Mr. Rand."

Rand gazed out across the Thames at the fog-shrouded faces of Big Ben. "These days, in certain quarters, absolute proof is not necessary for quick action."

Hastings nodded distastefully. "But I still have some compunctions about killing a woman. The spy is my secretary, Miss Leeds."

Rand whistled. "So that's why you wanted me here during lunch hour!"

"Exactly. I've done considerable investigating on my own, as you might imagine, and there can be no possible doubt as to her guilt."

"And just how could a spy obtain a position as confidential secretary to the head of a top-secret department?"

"Anne Leeds has been with me for years. She came with me when I moved up to this job. Of course they checked her security clearances, and all that, but everything seemed in order."

"Then prehaps you're mistaken," Rand suggested.

"Listen to the evidence yourself. For some time—ever since I took over this post, in fact—there's been a leakage of confidential information. A ham operator with a short-wave

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

radio has been transmitting our secrets to France, where no doubt they're passed on to Russia. He was using a quite ingenious code which British intelligence finally managed to break only a few months ago.

"When I saw the report I was dumfounded. This man, whose name is Felix Bay, makes a habit of broadcasting on his radio every Friday night at ten o'clock. Well, sometimes he would transmit on Friday night facts and figures I'd dictated only that very afternoon! He had information that no one on earth could have except myself and my secretary."

"Has Bay been arrested?"

The balding man shook his head. "They wanted to establish a definite link between him and Miss Leeds, then arrest both of them together if possible. So of course they put men on each one. It wasn't too difficult. She doesn't leave the office till five on Friday afternoons, and we knew he always had the information by ten o'clock Friday night."

"Five hours."

"Five hours. And she always spends them exactly the same way—at the Sherwood House with some of our younger employees. The Sherwood is on Great Peter Street where a lot of the people go on pay-days. They've got a sort of Friday Night Club—Anne Leeds and three or four other girls and a half dozen fellows from the office. It's harmless enough, and of course they've all been warned about discussing office matters in public. I guess they have a few beers and later on a sandwich, and sometimes they pair off for a cinema."

"And Felix Bay?"

"He's been followed to the Sherwood House for three Friday nights in a row. He gets there at six and usually stays about one hour."

"That seems to prove it, then."

Hastings nodded. "Except that it doesn't prove *how*. We've had top men on it, and they couldn't find how she does it."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that she and the others sit at a table in the corner with their drinks. Bay enters and sits across the room at the bar—*always with his back to her*. She never leaves her table while he's there, and she never raises her voice or anything like that. There is no physical way in which she can get the information to him—and yet she does. Every Friday night!"

"A short-range radio?" Rand suggested. "A sort of walkie-talkie?"

"While she's in conversation with at least six other people? Impossible. Besides, he wouldn't need to risk entering the bar every week if that were the case. He could pick up the radio signals on the outside. No, it must be something else—something our boys just haven't tumbled to."

"And that's where I come in?"

"That's where you come in. They say you have an eye for these things, Rand. The Chief himself suggested I request your help. They'll be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gathering at the Sherwood House tonight, and I want you to take a look."

"All right," Rand agreed. It was a job to him, and if he could work at it over a cold glass of ale, so much the better. There'd be some simple explanation—it was always something simple. Notes passed by a waiter—nothing more ingenious than that.

There was a bustle of voices outside, and a glance at the wall clock showed them the lunch hour was over. Rand nodded to Hastings and left the office by a side door, casting only the most casual glance at the blonde young lady who was just settling herself behind her desk out front.

She didn't look like a spy.

But then, they never did.

Sherwood House on a Friday evening in early autumn was a boisterous gathering place for the city's younger government employees. Two middle-aged waitresses, who bore no resemblance whatever to the Maid Marian, were kept busy delivering tall and magnificent mugs of beer, while the conversation swirled about vacation and weekend plans.

Rand arrived just before five and tried for the table in the corner, but one of the waitresses turned him away with a curt, "Reserved for some government people."

He chose a spot at the end of the bar, wondering what Felix Bay did for a seat when the pub was crowded. He'd dug the man's picture from the files that afternoon, and had studied the smooth-skinned, anemic profile until he felt certain he'd recognize it.

"Scotch and water," he told the bartender, though he would have preferred an ale. When the drink was before him, he settled down to wait, studying each new arrival in the back-bar mirror.

Anne Leeds arrived at 5:20 at the head of a jolly group. She was first at the corner table, selecting the chair against the wall. Drinks were ordered, cigarettes lit, and the group settled in for a congenial stay. At a few minutes after 6:00, Felix Bay strolled into the room and took a seat at the bar without looking around. Rand ordered another Scotch and water, and waited.

He realized at once that while Bay's back was to the girl, Bay had a perfect view of her in the mirror. But that did not really help him at all, because neither of them did a blessed thing to comunicate with each other. The man hunched over his drink, barely moving a muscle, and the girl seemed wrapped in conversation with her group.

After a time they both ordered more drinks, but the waitress was across the table from Anne Leeds and never went anywhere near Felix Bay's seat at the bar.

Finally, at exactly seven o'clock, Bay paid for his last drink and departed, still without having looked

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

once in the girl's direction. Rand left shortly afterward, convinced there would be no radioed secrets that night.

The following morning, at a prearranged meeting place, Hastings handed him a decoded message. "He sent this at ten o'clock last night, as usual."

The message read: *Amber squadron to Base Five, atom sub resumes regular patrols next week.*

Hastings cleared his throat. "The part about the atomic submarine was in a report I dictated to her Friday morning. The other information came through on Thursday."

"I can't believe it," Rand said. "She couldn't have got it to him—not last night."

"Then when?"

"Her lunch hour?"

"She doesn't go out—eats in the building cafeteria."

Rand rubbed a palm across his forehead. "You're positive that no one else knew? Only you and Miss Leeds?"

"No one else."

"Let me think about it, Hastings."

On Monday morning, Rand ordered a fresh security check on Hastings.

"You've been asking questions about me," Hastings said when they met again the next Friday morning. He said the words in a flat voice, without anger.

"I ask questions about everybody. But you came through with flying colors."

"I should hope so." The balding man lit a cigarette. "What now?"

Rand had thought about it—considerably. "Anything important for her this week?"

"No. I found an excuse to use another girl down the hall on one matter, and I typed a few letters myself."

"Make up something—something big."

"Atomic sub in for repairs?"

"Good."

"What are you going to do?"

Rand looked at him. "I want to be at her table tonight."

"How do I work that?"

"You'll think of something."

One of the young men in the Friday Night Club, a thin fellow with his hair cut too short, had the job of bringing Rand along. He introduced Rand as a new man in the Department. The others were friendly enough, including Anne Leeds, though they seemed curious at the presence of a 36-year-old newcomer in their youngish group.

Anne Leeds leaned back in her chair, exhaling twin jets of cigarette smoke through her nose. "And where were you before, Mr. Rand?" she asked.

"Foreign service, mostly—Egypt, Iran."

"It must have been warm out there."

"Warm, but I liked it better than this London weather. This autumn

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dampness gets right through to the bone." He glanced around as if for the waitress and saw Felix Bay was sitting at the bar.

Anne Leeds lit another cigarette from the butt of her first and exhaled in quick puffs. "They don't let you smoke in the office," she said. "At least, not the girls. I have to catch up after hours."

Rand watched while the waitress placed a new drink next to her half-finished glass. "Are you catching up on your drinking, too?"

She shrugged and took a sip. "The drinks here are good, and I'm thirsty. We come to the Sherwood every Friday evening. Friday's not a good date night in London. Never has been."

He smiled at her frankly provocative expression. "I shouldn't think a young lady with your charm would have any trouble, even on Friday nights."

"Thank you, kind sir, but I'm nearly thirty years old and feel every bit of it." She glanced around at the others, deep in their own conversations. "I don't belong with this crowd, not really. No more than you do."

"I'm new on the job."

She sent a cloud of blue cigarette smoke toward his face, smiling as she did it. "Let's get out of here and find a quieter place."

It was only 6:30, and Felix Bay was still at the bar. Rand wondered what she had in mind. "Right now?"

"Right now!" She stubbed out her cigarette and stood up without hesitation, leaving her second drink untouched. They made their excuses to the others and Rand guided her out the door without a glance toward the bar. He didn't know about other Friday nights, but he was certain no message had been passed this night.

A half hour later they were seated in a cozy little drinking place near Soho Square, and he was listening to the story of her life. "I'm still just a mixed-up kid," she told him. "Maybe I'm just bored."

"Don't you like working for Hastings in the Department? It's an important position."

"I like the job, but not all the rules and regulations that go with it. No smoking, no talking about your work, no excessive drinking, no questionable friends. You know, they check on every little move you make. I've been with Hastings for years, but there comes a time when other things become more important."

She seemed to want to add something more, but she didn't. Instead, she shifted the conversation back to him. "Are you in some sort of counterespionage?"

"Not really," he answered with partial truth. "Usually nothing like spy catching, though. A few years ago I helped investigate some card cheats who were preying on British and American servicemen. They had some interesting tricks."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Life is full of tricks," she said. "I hope *you're* not a trick, Rand, because I could grow to like you."

The evening ended with a stroll through the mist to her apartment, and a handshake at the door. He wanted nothing more.

Sub blue five returning for repairs, the message read.

Rand read it over three times and still couldn't believe it.

"The thing's impossible," he said, not without a trace of anger.

"I agree. That's why we called you in." Hastings seemed almost amused by his bafflement. "But this is the phony atom sub data I dictated to her yesterday afternoon. Somehow she passed it on to him."

"I was with her till after ten. And she never left my sight at the Sherwood House."

"Then there must be some sort of go-between. She slips a note to someone, who gets it to Felix Bay."

"No," Rand said, "I don't think so. Bay's presence in Sherwood House must be necessary each Friday evening. Otherwise he wouldn't risk even this slight contact with her."

"She always orders the same drink, and one of the fellows usually pays for it. So there's no signal to the waitress in any way. Does she leave anything on the table?"

Rand thought about it. "Nothing. Except her cigarette butts, of course. Cigarette butts? Why didn't I think of them before?"

Hastings smiled. "We thought of them the second week—before you were called in. The lab went over every single butt and found nothing at all—not a clue. Does she leave anything else?"

"She didn't last night—not even a match flap."

"All right," Hastings said with a sigh. "There's one other thing we haven't tried. When Felix Bay leaves the place next Friday, I'll have a couple of toughs roll him in an alley —see if he has any message on him."

But Rand quickly vetoed the suggestion. "He'd run for cover and the whole network would vanish in a puff of smoke. Besides, he probably carries the message in his head."

"All right," Hastings said, throwing up his hands. "What should I do? Fire her?"

"Give me one more week, Hastings—one more Friday night."

The balding man nodded reluctantly. "All right. We'll think up another false bit of news for her."

But as the week wore on, Rand began to feel more and more uncertain. He appeared at the office a few times, still in the guise of a new employee, and found opportunities to talk with Anne Leeds. She was always friendly, and sometimes provocative, but nothing came of their casual conversations.

"Will you be at the Sherwood tomorrow?" he asked on Thursday.

"I always am," she replied with a smile, and for just an instant he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wished he might have met her under different circumstances.

That night he went home without an idea in his head and watched an American Western movie on television.

The answer to it all came as simply as that.

On Friday evening he didn't sit at the table with Anne Leeds and the others. Instead, he took up his former position at the bar where he could watch her in the mirror and still keep an eye on Felix Bay.

Bay arrived on the stroke of six and ordered his usual drink, carefully turning his back on the corner table. Anne Leeds was deep in conversation with a girl from the Department, and never looked toward the bar—not even once.

At five minutes to seven, Rand walked to the phone booth and dialed an unlisted number.

"Take him," he told Hastings. "I know how she's doing it."

Then he went back to the bar and sipped his drink.

Felix Bay was three steps out of the door when they grabbed him.

Anne Leeds waited a few moments after the commotion, then rose to depart.

"I'm sorry," Rand said, reaching for her arm. "I'm afraid you're under arrest too."

"You?" she asked simply, and it was almost as if she had expected it.

"Me. I'm sorry, but it's my job." He helped her with her coat, then followed her to the door. Outside, assisting her into the waiting car, he asked, "How'd you ever get into this slimy sort of thing?"

She stared off at nothing for a long moment, then answered. "How? I told you things get mixed up sometimes. I guess I just had the wrong kind of friends."

Rand sat across the desk from Hastings, feeling only a vague and unsatisfying sense of triumph. There was no real joy in catching a woman like Anne Leeds, clever as she had been.

"How?" Hastings asked impatiently.

"I once ran across some cardsharps who passed signals across a table by the angle of a toothpick or cigar held in their mouths. And then last night I was watching some American Indians in a television movie and I realized she'd simply been using a variation of this gambling trick.

"Most people exhale cigarette smoke the same way fairly consistently, but Anne Leeds had an odd way of varying it. Sometimes she exhaled through her nose, other times through her mouth. Sometimes she exhaled all at once, other times in short bursts. Again, she'd blow the smoke directly across the table or angle it upwards. You see, Hastings, while Felix Bay watched in that mirror, she was sending him smoke signals."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

EDITORS' FILE CARD

AUTHOR: **BRYCE WALTON**

TITLE: ***The Virgin Cave***

TYPE: Crime Story

LOCALE: The Ozarks, United States

TIME: The Present

COMMENTS: *If you are a speleologist, you will have a special interest in this story; if you are not a speleologist, you will become one vicariously in this unusual story. Cave exploration—in one hard lesson.*

PROFESSOR ERNST ALBRACHT FUSSED with the winch motor over the cave opening while his favorite graduate student, Gerard Middleton, finished unloading the Jeep. Then Gerard, with careful efficiency, began filling up three haversacks with equipment and supplies for the big drop; he continued to move with an apparent easy calm, but he wondered how long he could bear the strain of waiting.

Nylon sleeping bags. Flashlights. Butane stove kits. Portable ladders. Hammers. Acetylene lamps. K-rations . . .

Gerard frowned. He wished Ellen wouldn't sit over there in the shade that way, smugly watching and singing. Albracht must not, of course, suspect anything, so they had to act natural. But Ellen shouldn't sing. She shouldn't act happy about what would soon happen to Albracht. She must have had some love or respect for him once; she had married him.

"Shake it up, Gerard," Albracht said in his kindly voice, as soothing as a doctor's. "This day'll be a scorcher, but nature's finest air-conditioning awaits us below."

Gerard smiled dutifully. He avoided looking at Ellen who kept sitting over there singing in the shade of eroded rock and wild cucumber vines. Gerard didn't have to look at her. He saw her with his eyes closed. But he couldn't stand looking and not being able to touch

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

her whenever he pleased. Because of Albracht, of course. He had to control himself a while longer. Then Albracht wouldn't be around. Never be around again.

Albracht had said he'd seen a small hole in the rocks no bigger than a varmint hole. He'd stuck his walking stick in, and the hole crumbled away to reveal a virgin cave. Now the opening was four feet wide. A winch had been built over the hillside hole, for they had to make a 600-foot drop by cable. A gray, taciturn hillbilly named Landaff was hired to stay topside and handle the winch motor. Albracht was helping him fuss with an ornery carburetor.

Gerard felt a sudden chilling burst of sweat as the motor abruptly kicked loose, then kept pounding away in a steady dependable rhythm. He took a deep breath, then hooked the haversacks to the winch cable, and, as Landaff prepared to lower them one by one, he joined Albracht and Ellen in the ritual of putting on appropriate clothing for the drop. Woolen shirts and socks, spike-soled boots, rubberized suits, spun-glass helmets with headlamps attached, and earphones with attached microphones.

No one said anything. They had to keep acting natural. Gerard usually avoided talk, while the Albrachts had given up trying to communicate with each other years ago.

Albracht clipped webbed shoulder harness to the cable hook, slid down, and watched the lever controlling the cable spool until he was supported entirely by the creaking wire. Landaff revved up the motor.

Gerard and Ellen smiled down at the Professor. The Professor, pink-faced with boyish excitement, his graying hair fluttering slightly, smiled up at them around his pipe-stem, then suddenly sank out of sight into the earth.

Landaff squatted by the winch motor watching them, so Ellen and Gerard avoided intimate glances. She was lowered next.

Gerard felt heat building up inside his rubberized suit. It had been a long wait. But then, when he was being lowered after Ellen, he realized that he hadn't really allowed himself to feel the accumulated tensions before.

The cozy secret meetings with Ellen, the exciting, dangerous whispering and planning—all of it suddenly exploded like one of his beautiful daydream bubbles. A chilling reality closed in around him, as cold and black as a grave.

But he could go through with it. He had to. But something seemed to be wrong with his face. He had lost control of it. He knew that his expression wasn't right. The comfortable, safe old mask had slipped off. It might even look real, he thought, the way he actually felt inside. Albracht mustn't see that. He might become suspicious.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Gerard worked on his face all the way down the chilling darkness. He fitted the old safe mask back on —the one that never showed anything.

Later their headlamps made three tiny stifled glimmers of light in a vast and absolute blackness, as they half slid, single file, down a high shale hill. Albracht took the lead. Gerard followed Ellen.

"This haversack hurts my shoulders," Ellen said. "Is all this boy scout equipment really necessary?"

"Yes," Albracht said. "It's all necessary. Caving is a dangerous sport. The loss of any item in your haversack could mean your death down here."

"You know a better way?" Ellen said, and giggled.

You shouldn't do that, Gerard thought. For you it's natural, but under present circumstances it isn't right, it's in bad taste.

As they explored along, Albracht stuck strips of red phosphorescent plastic tape to rocks. If necessary, it would guide them back in total darkness to the winch cable. It would lead rescuers to them in case of trouble, to any one of them. Just another thing Gerard had to keep in mind. It must happen in such a way that rescue would be impossible. If he botched this, he could hardly expect a second chance.

Although it must be done without a hitch, it was impossible to figure the exact method in advance —not in a virgin cave. But there were a number of excellent possibilities. A person could be crushed by a falling rock, pinned down to expire slowly; fall down a rocky shelf; get stuck in a fissure or crevice; fall into a bottomless pit; freeze, drown, or get lost; or be sucked into an underground river's flume. A person might build a fire in a cavern that had insufficient fresh oxygen and die from carbon monoxide poisoning. Cave deaths have even resulted from untimely explosions of bat guano.

But all these possibilities shared a common virtue—they appeared accidental. Ellen had taken out two double-indemnity policies on Albracht.

So he must stay alert, ready to seize exactly the right moment and select exactly the right place—and then act with pan-flash decision.

Ellen stopped suddenly. Gerard bumped into her and felt his stomach twitch as Albracht yelled up at them. He yelled again through megaphoned hands, this time in all directions. Measuring the cave's size, he explained, by timing the returning echoes of his voice. Then he said very quietly. "Seems to be a tremendous cavern. A real find."

"Congratulations," Gerard said.

"It always gets to me," Albracht said. "The feeling that no one's been here before you."

"Why should anybody ever be here?" Ellen said. "Why would

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

anyone rather be a mole than a man?"

"So let me suggest again, most sincerely, my dear—" somehow Albracht always maintained a gentle tolerance—"that you go back up and wait for us."

"One thing is more boring than crawling about in a hole," Ellen said. "Being alone in an Ozark cabin on a hot summer day."

"You never minded before."

"The television worked."

But Gerard knew the real reason she had insisted on making this drop—to be sure he did the job, and did it properly.

"A tremendous erosion pocket," Albracht said. "Seems cathedral-size."

"They'll name it after you, dear," Ellen said. "You'll be immortal. I can see it now—Ernie's Hole."

Albracht moved on without comment, his body a gesture of tireless forebearance. He managed skillfully to find ways through boulders and stalagmites. But it seemed to Gerard, depressingly, that they only made a large erratic circle without finding another exit. Still there has to be one, Gerard thought, his mouth dry. It had to happen to Albracht in some remote cavern or labyrinth, not here where Landaff would know at once if there was trouble.

Albracht sank to his knees. He flashed his light into a small opening through a wall of sparkling limestone crystal. "Cold draft coming," he mused aloud. "Probably another cavern at the other end. Seems short, no more than fifteen feet, I'd say, judging from the sound of running water coming through. Might be a tight squeeze, so you may have to push your haversacks through ahead of you. I'll go first. If it's clear I'll give you the word to follow."

Albracht was still talking with boyish enthusiasm as he wriggled away out of sight.

Ellen gave Gerard a sly, conspiratorial wink. He smiled back, but slightly past her direct gaze, and found his sight going out into infinite blackness. He felt a quick sharp squirm of fear.

Her whisper exploded in the vast stillness like a paper bag. "This caving is so childish and stupid!"

"So are a lot of things," Gerard said.

"But he hasn't really cared about anything else for years. Why?"

"I know facts," Gerard said. "You want to know how these erosion pockets are formed out of limestone, okay, I can tell you. But —"

"You're already beginning to talk like a damn professor—like *him!*"

Albracht's sudden sepulchral voice came out of the rock. "All right now, Ellie. It's about twenty feet. Careful."

She smiled at Gerard, then squirmed out of sight. He shivered. It wasn't just her eyes or her smile.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But whatever she said, the way she stood or sat or walked was an invitation and a promise . . .

He had been most grateful for her smile. At first he had been grateful only to Albracht. The professor taught botany and speleology, and the latter was also his hobby. When not lecturing or writing treatises and popular articles on caves, he explored them. Every summer he favored one graduate student with an invitation to share the Albrachts' vacation in their Ozark cabin. Relaxation was combined with speleological field work around Lake Tanacomo.

Albracht had first invited Gerard to his house near the campus to share a faculty tea. Gerard had been deeply grateful for Albracht's recognition. He met Ellen that afternoon and she smiled at him. Few women had ever smiled at Gerard, and none had ever smiled at him quite that way. In all his life no woman like Ellen had ever really looked at him. Attractive, sophisticated, much younger than Albracht who was 50, Ellen had a genuinely hypnotic charm.

Gerard's gratitude was measureless. Too many of his 25 years had been fevered away during lonely nights with books, ambitions, and dreams instead of human beings. Too many years alone, quietly bitter, secretly angry for always having to work his way, he had every reason to be a bottomless well of gratitude. Grateful for Albracht. Grateful for Ellen and her smile. Indescribably grateful for what came after the smile during those secret cozy meetings. Most grateful for her promises.

Gerard had been hungry all his life.

They stood on a dangerously narrow ledge about twelve feet long. And Albracht studied the rent in Ellen's rubberized suit made by a snagging rock. Ellen's face was pale. In the beam of Albracht's headlamp the gash in her suit looked like a jagged, perhaps mortal wound.

Albracht kept insisting that Ellen turn back at once because of the torn suit. But Ellen insisted on continuing what she called "this most fabulous exploration of the century." Gerard caught part of a supposedly clever remark about her being a beautiful icicle or the greatest of all tourist attractions, a stalagmite shaped like a girl.

But Gerard was more concerned with the sound of the river gurgling below. The beam of his headlamp caught the water's dark shine swirling deep and deadly through ice-coated rocks. It can happen here, he thought, here and now. Albracht could fall into the river. No, it must be absolutely certain. Albracht could fall into the river—but only if it was certain he would drown.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ellen leaned toward Gerard. "What's that chirping?"

Gerard moved his flash and focused it in a tiny crack. "Cave cricket."

"What was that, young man?" Albracht asked, assuming a deliberately exaggerated professorial tone.

"*Ceuthopilus,* sir." Gerard said in mock apology. "Similar to the cricket found in cellars. After a few generations born in total darkness, their eyes become useless and are bred out. They also lose their color. No need of protective camouflage in total darkness."

"Very good," Albracht said. "Yes, my favorite pupil."

"Mine too," Ellen said. "But that awful cricket. I hate it. White like a little slug and with no eyes."

"But it's happy without light," Albracht said. "It loves and lives and sings."

"It shouldn't," Ellen said. "It shouldn't want to sing or be alive here at all."

She stepped back in disgust and would have fallen from the ledge if Albracht hadn't caught hold of her. But she let out a high sharp yell. It disturbed thousands of bats hibernating somewhere up in the darkness.

Albracht shouted a warning. Gerard covered his eyes with his arms as a hot stinking mass squealed around him. He remembered that cave bats' teeth were usually not strong enough to break skin, and they used their "sonar" to fly, so they were never likely to get in your hair. But they could take out your eyes.

Gerard uncovered his eyes at Ellen's second scream. He saw her topple backward into the misty blackness as the last of the bats fluttered away. Her headlamp and helmet flew off and when the light left her, her body seemed to dissolve in a black paste. It fell in a strangely stiff way except for her arms that went round and round twice like pale lily stalks.

Then she toppled end over end, as rigid as a display-window mannequin.

Albracht shouted. Gerard felt paralyzed with the horror of feeling his mask of control slipping. But he didn't lose control. The mask remained—the thin boyish look, diffident and shy, the wide and guileless blue eyes, the odd lack of animation.

He ran to help Albracht. He lunged out of fear and in an agony of release at the thought of Ellen dissolving into nothing. It was as if a spear had been jerked out of his pierced belly.

He got out the portable ladder—nylon cord with aluminum rings attached. He got the cord hooked to a spike, and the spike hammered into a crack below the ledge. Albracht climbed fearlessly down the ladder and plunged to his armpits in the vicious current. He slipped, went under, reappeared, spun

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

away, and then clung helplessly to a rock.

Gerard got there fast, but he was frightened now. If Ellen was really gone, he'd be alone with it—alone in the darkness. The current dragged at him. But he was still in control, going slow, testing his spike-soles on the slick bottom. He knew now that they were all an eyewink away from death.

As he worked along toward where Ellen's pale face and black hair bobbed like a matted cork, he saw, only thirty feet downstream, the river boiling suddenly down under a limestone wall in a seething whirlpool. Ellen was struggling weakly in a kind of backwash in the rocks. He finally managed to get the nylon line hooked to her webbed belt, and then Albracht helped him reel her into a large eroded pocket he had found in the limestone wall on a level with the rushing river.

Then she sat shivering on a bed of fine gravel bleached as white as dried salt.

"Anything else wrong, Ellie? Broken bones or anything?"

Her blue lips worked until she finally stuttered faintly, "Just—just cold."

The icy water had entered through the tear in her suit, and she could freeze to death in minutes.

"We'll fix that up," Albracht said. "You'll warm up in the sleeping bag while we dry your clothes over the stove." He looked up at Gerard. "Get out the butane stove and set it up." Then he began unrolling Ellen's sleeping bag.

Gerard got the stove assembled and as he lit it, he looked up. Something in his stomach turned completely over. Albracht was taking her clothes off. Gerard shivered, looked quickly away. He heard Albracht say, "Take a look over there where the river goes under the wall, Gerard, please. Maybe we can find a way through."

But Gerard didn't find a way through the wall. He worked back through the erosion pocket about 50 feet, but found no opening. He didn't want to find one. Albracht evidently wanted to keep on exploring if he found a way, but Gerard was finished. His nerves wouldn't stretch an inch farther.

He stood motionless in a forest of helectites, those stony formations that curl and twist in grotesque patterns. He saw through them to where, just beyond a thicket of icicles about 30 feet away, Ellen lay in the sleeping bag near the river. The scene was a weird frozen stillness, a small bowl of light locked in infinite blackness where nothing moved. Ellen didn't move. The propped flashlight was still and unblinking. No air stirred. The flame of the butane stove didn't flicker even slightly in the dead air.

And where was Albracht?

Gerard felt one of those recurring,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

engulfing needs to be with Ellen, to be close to her, as close as to his own body. When he'd been with her before, in that wondrous secrecy, she had made him feel heady, reckless, willing and able to do anything.

He got to her as quickly as he could and knelt beside her sleeping bag.

"Where's Albracht?"

Her little mocking smile had come back, but there was apprehension in her eyes as she pointed.

Gerard flashed his headlamp over through the rocks and listened.

"You don't look so good," she said. "Better get on with it, before your feet get colder than mine."

Albracht's sudden shout jerked Gerard around and seemed to pinch at his stomach. Albracht's face, illuminated by his own flashlight, glowed suspended over the black water like a luminescent ceremonial mask. He was neck-deep in that treacherous tide, at the very edge of the whirlpool.

Ellen cried out in genuine disbelief. "Ernie, what are you doing there?"

Albracht yelled for the end of the nylon line. Gerard tossed it out. Albracht hooked it underwater to his belt. "If I don't come back, haul me in," he said.

"What are you doing?" Ellen almost screamed.

"Don't worry," he shouted back, his face wet and shining with spray. "There's an airspace up here and if I don't slip I can get through without getting my face under. There's another big chamber on the other side of this wall. The river may come up again over there."

Then he waved, and his head dissolved in foam. Then darkness . . .

Half an hour later, Gerard still held the frayed broken end of the nylon line he had reeled in. There was still no sight or sound of Albracht.

"He must be crazy," Ellen whispered. "He wouldn't have that kind of nerve."

"Any caver has to have guts," Gerard said heavily. "Even him."

"But what's happened to him?"

"We don't know," Gerard said.

"We have to know."

"Yes. River might come up again over there, might not. Might have taken him down to hell."

"He must have thought he would come up somewhere."

"He must have. But he couldn't be sure."

"We have to make sure."

"We ought to," Gerard said.

"We have to *know* what's happened to him. He may be hurt. Broken bones, or something. He may still be alive. Maybe help can reach him. We don't *know*. Maybe he's all right, and can get out some other way. We have to make sure."

"You mean I have to make sure." Gerard rubbed his hands together.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Make sure he'll never be found —or not be found too soon."

Fear surged through Gerard's body. But it didn't show. He stood up. The fear was worse than other recent moments of near terror. But Ellen had enabled him to do what he could never have done anywhere else except in his dreams. And anything, any risk, was better than the dull, empty, unpromising loneliness he had always known before.

He hooked a nylon line to his belt, tied the other end around a stalagmite, and waded into the river.

"Wait for me here," he said. Then his spike-soled shoes slipped out into sickening softness, and the current dragged him down. A black mouth sucked and swallowed him. It chewed, it gurgled, it ground him down through a rocky gullet. He struggled, like a helpless, futile bug flushed down a drain.

His webbed belt snagged. He kicked, he strained, he screamed inside, bursting and suffocating. His belt tore free and he shot away and down, free of it, but leaving everything attached to it—knife, ax, first-aid kit, matches. Helmet and headlamp ripped away with some of his scalp. His tortured lungs, bursting, pried open his mouth. An icy paste of sooty black poured in to drown and freeze his soul . . .

He lay on corrugated rock somewhere near the river. He concentrated on maintaining control, his one dependable protection. Especially his breath. He kept his breathing low, slow, easy. If his breathing got loud, it echoed, and he would hear it even above the sound of the river. He didn't want to hear that again, not that loud erratic blood-thump in his ears. He didn't want to hear himself at all again. It was only a reminder of all the sound there was now, or ever could be.

The river had spewed him up again, but there was no way of knowing where. A 600-foot drop, then a walk and a climb down several hundred more feet, then the river had sucked him down—no way to figure how much farther down, or to where.

There was no way out from wherever he was—no way but the river. He didn't want to make that terrible drop again. He could never bring himself to go that way again.

His shattered wrist watch was a phosphorescent smear on his arm. He had opened his eyes in pitch-blackness. There was no sound. Nothing turned. No light went off and on. Nothing stopped and started anywhere. There was no more time.

He knew he could have been wherever he was for hours, for weeks, for months. But he had no idea how long he could stay, how long he could keep himself alive.

He concentrated on holding himself in one rigid integrated piece. The stillness was without end, the blackness absolute. He had bulged

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his eyes hopefully at first, strained and popped them at the dark trying to find light somewhere, even the tiniest light. But pure blackness pressed over his face, muffled his nose and mouth, suffocated him.

He merely existed in the dark. A worm, he thought. A blind worm or one of the first amebas that ever lived on earth.

He had hated his life. To change it into something else, anything else, he had been ready to kill a man. A man whom he respected, a man who cared for him. But now the bitterest memory he had of that hated past was a vision of paradise. Sights, sounds, memories kept thumping at his brain, almost but never quite getting in, like bugs hitting lighted windows.

Now he could only lie blind and breathing in the dark. He had crawled in carefully measured circles trying to find a way out. He had explored every inch, squirmed into every hole and over every rock. And he was sure now: there was no way out—no way but the river.

There were only little potholes, slightly warm from subterranean springs. Pools in which food bred, lived brief blind cycles. Where salamanders crawled, totally blind, with layers of skin pulled by eons of evolution over the remnants of eyes they no longer needed.

Now Gerard felt blindly about—he grabbed, fumbled, lost, retrieved. The great blind hunter. He learned slyness and skill. Little crayfish, panarian worms, isopods, hydras, water sponges, even a few mollusks, slugs, and snails.

He caught and crushed them to watery pulp in his numbed fingers. He seemed to have eaten thousands of times, devoured thousands and thousands of salamanders, snails, slugs, crayfish—all as blind and white as he—but he knew that it would end sometime, that when he reached into the potholes and found them empty, found he had eaten them up faster than they could breed, it would all be over . . .

Slowly he opened his eyes. Silently he listened for that very tiny sound that had gone through him like a shiver of glass. Blackness. No change. He held his breath, waited, hoped. Only silence.

His gaze kept going out, meeting infinite layers of darkness. He started to raise his hand to his face, but there was no way to keep his eyes from seeing out and out—into nothing.

He started to run.

His body thumped. It battered. It bounced and went down. Little violent explosions went off in his head—

But he was free now. Even if there were eyes here, the eyes of judges, juries, the condemning eyes of all his enemies, they couldn't harm him. They couldn't see his face to know how he felt, to know exactly where and how he was vulnerable. So they could never again

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

attack, laugh, jeer, humiliate, beat, and murder him. He was safe now. No one ever again would see him exposed, naked and helpless.

He had thought he was alone and safe before, hiding behind his expression, his perpetual mask. Now he knew what being alone really was. Oh, it was safe all right. And he knew something else—there were things more horrible than being alone, than not being quite safe. No matter where you are there is always a much worse place. No doubt of that. A much much worse place—

He laughed.

Things seemed to break loose inside him. He began to yell—a monotonous, low, oddly controlled yelling as he beat the rocks with his fists . . .

He kept grinning up at the light. He smiled at it. He kept hoping it was a real light, a light that would never go away. He prayed. The light stayed, and, yes, that was the Professor—dear old Albracht! No mistaking that face shining under the headlamp's beam—that familiar, kindly face of Ernst Albracht.

The light stayed and shone down with that unearthly luminiscence of angels seen in church windows. The professor's voice was gentle too—just like the touch of his hand reaching down, lifting up.

"Let's go now, Gerard. I'll help you."

Yes, sir, yes, sir—

Albracht led the way without hesitation. He seemed to know exactly where he was and where he was going. But Gerard knew that he would never have the vaguest idea how they got through—through a maze that would have bewildered rats. Along narrow ledges, through narrow crevices, down shale slides, down slopes of fluted limestone, through tunnels of ice . . .

When they got there he knew at once where they were. He knew when Albracht started peeling off the phosphorescent strips of plastic tape. It was the route Albracht had once marked, and was now dissolving behind them.

Gerard recognized the cathedral-like stillness, the steep high rockslide of glittering shale where the suspended cable gleamed like a strand of iridescent cobweb. And there was the cave opening 600 feet above his head. Gerard stood quivering below that bar of familiar light. It sliced down into his eyes, across his cheekbone and jaw, with a thin bar of fire.

He stumbled up the shale like a drunken mole in strong light. It was such a short way from where he had lain, where he had died over and over in the darkness. He just hadn't known the way. But Albracht knew. He seemed to have known all the time.

Gerard felt a cold charge of fear.

Albracht's eyes were close to him now, like drops of clear dark water, fixed and unblinking.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"This isn't a virgin cave," Gerard said. "You've been here before. You knew where we were going. You knew exactly where I was all the time."

"I've known about you and Ellen, too, for some time," Albracht said gently. "And I knew what you had planned for me." He took a slow drag at his pipe. "But let's go on up now, Gerard. We've got to break the news of the tragic accident to Landaff."

"Accident?"

"Oh, yes, she fell into the river, remember? A search party will be down here inside an hour. We'll all do our best to find Ellie, of course, but no one ever will. No one knows where the river goes."

"We could—" Gerard's voice broke.

"You think you could find her?" Albracht asked. "No, believe me, you can't. No one can ever find her now."

"Why?" Gerard whispered. "Why have you saved me?"

"You're a fine scholar, Gerard, with a great potential to do good. I have always felt responsible to correct in what little ways I can the faults of miseducation."

Albracht smiled around his pipestem. "I left you there for seven hours, my boy, hoping it would bring about a vital change in you—for the better. As an experience, you know—a learning experience . . . a lesson for the future."

NEXT MONTH . . .

a detective *short novel*—complete!

PATRICK QUENTIN's *The Lady Had Nine Lives*

NEW stories—

CHARLOTTE ARMSTRONG's *Protector of Travelers*

LAWRENCE TREAT's *H As in Holdup*

KATHERINE DUNHAM's *The Devil's Accomplice*

another Honor Roll reprint—

AGATHA CHRISTIE's *Express to Stamboul*

The June 1965 issue will be on sale May 4, 1965.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a gripping detective-suspense novelet by

JOHN & WARD HAWKINS

Sam Wagner was a cop—a good cop. He and Lila had been married ten years—the good years of their lives, with better ones coming up. For Lila was going to have a baby, their first, and Sam's son—oh, yes, they were sure it would be a boy. But—Lila was a worry bird, first class, and she cared for Sam, had built her life around him. But there were times when caring too much meant worrying too much . . . and now a killer had escaped from prison, and he had only one idea fixed in his deranged brain —to kill . . .

THE KILLER IS LOOSE

by JOHN & WARD HAWKINS

SAM WAGNER WAS DREAMING WHEN the telephone rang. He was sitting in a blind in duck heaven and the mallards were coming in, settling over the decoys, when the shrill ringing called him home to the bedroom on Montgomery Street. He pawed blindly at the bedside table and found the telephone.

"Yeah," he said. "Wagner here."

"Sergeant Baxer, Sam. You awake?"

Sam Wagner threw the covers back and put his feet on the floor. He peered at the luminous face of the clock. Two A.M.

"Now I'm awake," he said. "Go ahead."

"Leon Poole took a walk," Baxer said. "The chief thought you ought to know. He told me to call you."

"Leon Poole," Sam Wagner said. "How'd he do it?"

"He was a trusty on the honor farm. One of the guards took him along as a helper on a truck, late this afternoon. The truck never got to town. Took 'em a while to find it."

"The guard?"

"Dead. Poole put a knife in his throat."

After a moment, Sam said, "Any sign of Poole?"

"Not yet. He ditched the truck fifteen miles this side of Winston. The state and county boys are out in force. They want him bad, Sam. That guard was a cold-blooded piece of work."

"Anything I can do?"

"No. Chief wanted you to know,

Copyright 1958 by The Curtis Publishing Company.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that's all. You put Poole in the pen. Sit tight, he says. Keep a sharp eye."

"Okay," Sam said. "Thanks for calling."

He sat on the edge of the bed, listening to the wind rip through the fir trees that stood behind the house. Rain slashed at the windows. The storm the papers had been talking about had finally arrived.

"Sam," Lila said, "who was that?"

The telephone had awakened her. Sam rubbed the back of his neck and shuffled his feet on the cold floor. He thought if Don Ameche had had a wife like Lila—nervous and a fretful sleeper—he would never have invented the telephone. For Lila, a ring in the night always signaled a major calamity.

"Sergeant Baxer," he said. "A trusty got loose from the state honor farm. The chief thought I ought to know."

"Why?"

"Because I'm a cop," Sam said. "It's part of my work to know about things like that. Tomorrow's work." He swung his feet back into bed, leaned over, found her nose and twisted it gently. "Remember your condition," he told her. "Plenty of rest, the doc says. Now turn it off and go back to sleep."

He put his head on the pillow. Beside him, Lila moved restlessly. Lila was good people, his one true love—ten years of married life had sold him on that a million times. But she was a worry bird, first class. Give her a big item like what dress to wear and she could fret herself into a pink tizzy. Give her a cop for a husband and she really—

She sat up beside him. "Sam, I'm hungry."

"You had a big dinner."

"I don't care," she said. "I'm hungry again." When he didn't respond, she said, "We're hungry."

"Unfair tactics," he said. "You're ganging up on me."

"Would you deny your son nourishment?"

"Five months before he gets here," Sam said, "and he's already got an appetite like a horse. Better send him back. I don't think I'm gonna be able to afford him."

"Sam," she said, "we're hungry."

He threw the covers back. "Hot chocolate and cinnamon toast," he said. "Comin' up."

He found his robe and slippers and went through the house to the kitchen. He put a pan of milk on the stove. He covered slices of bread with butter, sugar, and cinnamon and put them in the oven.

"What a gal," he said.

He was thirty-five, an even six feet tall, hard-fleshed and lean. His hair was close-cropped. He had big rough hands and rangy shoulders. His face was not a gentle face. His cheekbones were prominent, his jaw was taut and narrow, his heavy brows grew almost solidly over his blue eyes. But there was kindness in his eyes. Now worry pulled at the corners of his mouth. He turned to find Lila in the doorway.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"What's this?" he said. "You don't like the service?"

She came into the kitchen, pulling tight the belt of her robe. She was tall and underweight—her pregnancy had yet to add a pound. She had a rather long face and large hazel-brown eyes. A beautiful woman, a sensitive woman and a devoted wife. Sam knew it well.

He knew she had built her life around him, completely and for good, and he called that fine. But there were times when caring too much meant worrying too much.

Take that deal about the gun. A couple of weeks ago, all of a sudden, she'd blown up a storm because he had to carry a gun to earn a living. So now he got in and out of his shoulder rig in the closet where she couldn't see it.

"Two A.M.'s no time for talk," he said.

"It's Leon Poole, isn't it?"

"You heard me say so."

"And while you were out here I remembered who he is. He's the one—I mean, it was his wife you killed, wasn't it?"

"That's the guy," Sam said.

"I remember seeing him in court." Her lips tightened. "He's dangerous, Sam. Very dangerous."

Sam spread his arms in exasperation. "Dangerous," he said. "To you, even a bicycle thief is lethal. Why don't you be sensible? This guy is nobody."

Lila looked at him steadily. She looked past him, back more than three years, and saw Leon Poole again. In the courtroom. She'd been there because it had been Sam's case, and a big one. Big in the papers, at least, with the wife killed. She saw Poole whisper to his lawyer, saw the lawyer turn and find her, saw Poole turn and find her.

"He frightened me," she said.

It was hard to know why. He hadn't been rough-looking. Soft was the word for him, a fleshy man of medium height, with plump hands and cheeks. Features almost feminine—straight nose, large long-lashed dark eyes, thick dark hair. His eyes, she thought. His eyes were liquid, steady and staring.

"He was a thief," Sam said. "And not a very good one."

"He says you killed his wife."

"She wound up with three bullets in her," Sam said. "Mine and two others. Which one did it? Nobody knows."

"He says you did it."

"Because he's got to stick it on somebody. Just one man, not three. It was my case. I questioned him, I ran him down. So he chose me for the guy that killed her."

"He said he'd get even."

"Quit it!" Sam leaned stiff-armed on the table. "If you think Poole will get a chance to take a shot at me, you're very mistaken. In the first place, he isn't going to want to. That 'I'll get you for this, copper!' is a lot of blow. We hear it all the time. Nothing comes of it. Second

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

place, he hasn't a chance of staying loose."

"What makes you so sure?"

"Common sense," Sam said. "He's wearing prison numbers on his back a foot high. He's got no dough, no gun, and he's afoot. Every cop in the state's looking for him." Sam took his hands off the table and thrust them into the pockets of his robe. "A lot of big tough men try to bust out of Winston. Not one in a thousand gets more than a few miles."

The milk was boiling, the toast was burning. Sam swore, threw it all away, and started over. When he turned to Lila, he found her pale, eyes large and dark.

"Hey, cut it out," he said.

"You know what I'm thinking?"

"I should," he said. "I've seen that look often enough. And I've heard the story often enough too. You don't want to be a cop's widow. If I loved you as much as you love me, I'd get out of police work."

"You think I'm being selfish?"

"Just the opposite." Sam said it earnestly, meaning and believing every word. "You're gone on me—why I'm that lucky I'll never know. You're scared to death something is going to happen to me. I know you can't any more stop worrying than you can stop breathing. But the answer's still no. I'm not going to quit police work."

"What about him, Sam?" Lila asked. "There's two of us."

"That's not a clean punch," Sam said.

"I think it is."

Sam put chocolate and toast on the kitchen table. He did not speak again until he had finished the task. Lila, watching him, knew what he would say. His eyes were stubborn, his brows were pulled down in a line she knew only too well.

"There are thousands and thousands of men in police work," he said. "They live full and satisfying lives—long lives, most of them. Their wives put up with it. Their kids put up with it. You and the lad will have to do the same. I'll do any reasonable thing for you. This is not reasonable. I won't do it."

Lila said, "I'll ask again."

Sam was up at six o'clock. Lila was standing beside the table when he walked into the kitchen. Her eyes were huge. The morning paper was beside his plate, opened on headlines big and black.

"He killed a guard, Sam. You didn't tell me."

"At two A.M.?—no, I didn't tell you," he said. "There's nothing to fret about, Lila. They'll get him. A guard's the same as a cop. A cop killer doesn't get away."

"Then cops do get killed?"

Sam wondered if every man was as thickheaded as he was at six in the morning. Cop killer—what a thing to say. "They'll get him," he said.

His breakfast eggs got cold while he explained how a manhunt was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

organized. The escape routes were blocked—the main highways, side roads, railroads, rivers. Then the enclosed area was searched, house to house, barn to barn, field to field.

Poole had killed a guard. He'd get the big treatment—bloodhounds, planes, helicopters, cops by the hundred. More than that, every man, woman, and child would be on watch for him. What chance would a man wearing prison clothes have?

"No chance at all," Sam said.

"Some do get through."

"With help," Sam said. "They have a pal waiting at a certain place at a certain time with money, clothes, and transportation. Poole didn't have help. How could he have known the guard was going to take him to town? He saw the chance, grabbed it, and ran. He won't get far."

The doorbell rang. Sam saw the convulsive closing on Lila's hands. For all his talking, he'd done very little good.

"I'll get it," he said.

There were two uniformed cops on the front porch, a prowl car parked at the curb. Sam Wagner knew both officers, Harris and McNamee. They were both veterans, big and competent.

Harris gave Sam a grin. "We're on special duty out here," he said. "We're goin' to keep an eye on the place."

"Poole's still loose then?"

"But not for long. It's coming daylight now."

"Right," Sam said.

Lila was waiting for him in the kitchen, her hands locked at her waist. "Why are they here?" she asked. "What do they want? Sam, please don't lie to me."

"Okay." He put big hands on her shoulders. "If Poole gets through, he might come here. That's about as long as a chance can get, but it's being covered. You see? There's nowhere Poole can go—nowhere—that he won't find cops waiting for him."

"I see," she said.

But her eyes told him she didn't see it the right way. Her eyes told him she had taken about all she was able to take.

"Time I went to work," he said.

Quietly she said, "Goodbye Sam."

Sam backed his car out of the garage, drove two blocks to the main east-west freeway, and fell in with the stream of early-morning traffic. He found himself thinking of Leon Poole again.

A real odd-ball, that one. Clever as Satan in some ways, very dumb in others. He'd been a building-and-loan teller. He'd rigged a hold-up, scheduling it for a time when an unusually large amount of cash was on hand. An accomplice had waved a gun and made off with the loot. A clean score, until it became obvious that only three men had known

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

when the till would be stuffed with money.

An inside job then, clearly. Sam had interrogated and released all three suspects. Leon Poole's telephone had been tapped. Poole, on the second day, had called the accomplice. That one had confessed quickly enough, naming Poole as the man who'd planned the holdup. Sam and two others had gone to make the arrest, and there the simple job had jumped the rails.

Leon Poole had had a gun. The plump man with the round face and big smile had opened fire when he heard the police at his apartment door. He'd put a bullet through the arm of a uniformed officer. They'd gone in after him—what else?

The rest had been unfortunate. They'd thought Poole was alone. Four of the neighbors had seen his wife leave the building. But when it was done, when the fat and weeping man was handcuffed, Doris Poole, the wife, was dead.

Four of the neighbors had seen her leave the building, none had seen her return. Stalking an armed man through strange, dark rooms is uneasy work. Reflex is faster than thought. Doris Poole had simply appeared in the wrong doorway at the wrong time.

Sam Wagner shook his head. Three years and more, and he could still remember the numb despair of that moment.

But you can't bring a dead woman back to life. And you can't dwell in the past. You have to go on to the next day, and the next. Tough, but there it is. Not heartless, helpless.

Sam parked behind police headquarters. He rode the elevator to the third floor. The bulletin board was on his left. Leon Poole's mug had been posted there. Some face, Sam thought. Dark, long-lashed eyes; dark, rumpled hair; white, plump cheeks; a wide, full mouth. A malleable face. It had been sullen before the police camera, but Sam could remember it reflecting other moods: full of boyish charm and cheer, crumpled and streaked with tears, loose and torn with grief, snarling with hate—an actor's face.

A voice said, "Here early, aren't you Sam?"

"Only a couple of hours," Sam said.

He turned. This guy he liked: Chris Gillespie. Chris was big and loosely built, a little overweight, but hard under the padding. He was a cop with an education and better off than most for looks: curly hair, straight nose, white teeth. He liked blue suits, loud blue ties, and white shirts. Sam had the seniority—two years—and half Chris' education, but in four years of working together they'd never had a quarrel. Sam wrinkled his nose.

"You smell," he said.

"New shaving lotion. Like it?"

"Lovely," Sam said. "Just lovely."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Chris grinned. "Chief wants to see you."

"Poole?"

"What else?" Chris said. He took Sam's arm. Going down the hall, he said, "How's Lila?"

"Not happy," Sam said. "Baxer called me at two this morning. About Poole. Lila got in on it and hit the roof. You know how she's always after me to quit the cops and get in a safe line of work. Now, with a killer loose, blaming me for killing his wife, wanting my blood, she's taking it hard."

"It won't get better," Chris said.

"What d'you mean?"

"I'll let the chief tell you," Chris said.

The chief of detectives, Bob Brennan, was busy. He had one phone propped on his shoulder, another was ringing. A tape recorder occupied one corner of his desk, the rest was covered with reports.

Jim Snow, lieutenant, state patrol, was waiting with something half said. A pair of sharp young men—F.B.I., likely—were watching the chief; waiting too. Sam and Chris Gillespie went to stand by a window.

Sam said, "How'd Poole make the honor farm?"

"A model prisoner," Chris said.

Poole had done three years inside the walls. Cheery, hard-working, eager to please from the first day. The guards had liked him, the brain doctor had liked him, the warden had liked him. Poole was a first offender, determined to pay his debt to society and make a new life. He'd deserved a break; they'd given it to him.

"A bill of goods," Sam said.

"They know it now," Chris said. "Poole was just building for the break. Worked on it a long time and brought it off as smooth as a—"

"Sam."

It was Bob Brennan chief of detectives. Sam went over to the desk and Brennan introduced him. "Jim Snow, Fisk and Cassidy, F.B.I.," he said. "This is Sam Wagner, the arresting officer." Now he looked steadily at Sam. "Turns out we've got a psycho on our hands."

"Poole's a psycho?" Sam asked.

"Looks that way."

Bob Brennan was a cop. He'd been one for thirty-five years and he wore the stamp. A big man, strong and beefy. He had slate-gray eyes, a rough-hewn face, and short, stiff gray hair. And he was shrewd. When he gave an opinion, men listened.

"What's the pitch?" Sam asked.

"He was a short-timer," Brennan said. "He has only a few years to do, and that on the honor farm. But he broke out the hard way, killing a guard. All to get even with you."

Sam said, "If I had a dollar for every thief who's promised me a hole in the head, I'd be a rich man."

"You and me and a million others," Brennan said. "But this one's different. It's what makes him a psycho. He doesn't want to put a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hole in your head. He wants to kill your wife."

"My wife!"

"That's right," Brennan said. "He blames you for killing his wife, he wants an eye for an eye. I expect he'd settle for you, if he can't get your wife, but she's his target."

He flicked the switch of the tape recorder. While the tubes warmed, he said, "The warden of the state prison sent us this tape. After the break he put Poole's old cell mate on the carpet, thinking he might get something we could use." He adjusted the tape reels. "Listen."

" . . . the truth, s'help me. He kept saying he was dead. He kept saying he died the day that—that Sam Wagner killed his wife. Only one idea in Poole's head, just one. If I heard him say it once, I heard him say it a thousand times. Why should Wagner's wife be alive after Wagner killed Poole's wife? Was his wife any better? A lot of that—hour after hour. He said he'd bust out some day and kill the cop's wife. After that, he don't care what happens to him."

Brennan switched the recorder off. "Well?"

"I don't know," Sam said. "It's hard to believe."

"He murdered a guard to get off an honor farm," Brennan said. "If I can believe that, I can believe this."

Sam Wagner looked at the faces of the other men in the room. They believed it.

Brennan spoke again. "We ran the whole tape before you got here," he said. "An hour of it. This guy and a couple of others. They all say the same thing. Want to hear it?"

Sam said, "Some other time."

He rubbed the back of his neck. This was something. Something a long way from the story he'd given Lila. He was wondering what Lila would say about it when one of the desk phones rang.

Brennan answered it. "Brennan speaking." He listened for several minutes. The men waiting learned nothing from his heavy face. "Thanks," he said. "Keep me informed." He pushed the phone aside and looked at those around the desk.

"Now he's got a gun," he said.

The skylight of a hardware store had been forced in the early hours of the morning, four thirty or five. A .357 Magnum revolver and a box of shells were missing. The local police had checked for prints. It had taken them this long to identify them as Leon Poole's. So Poole was armed.

"The store's in Tilden," Brennan said. Lieutenant Snow's breath hissed through stiff lips. Sam knew why. Tilden was only thirty miles away. The main roadblocks, the search, had been closer to the prison. Poole had somehow got past them. He'd come halfway.

"Don't ask me how," Brennan said. Nobody knows." He looked at Lieutenant Snow, of the state

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

patrol. "Keep your shirt on," he said. "Your lads are doing a good job. And they've doubled everything now, this side of Tilden. Poole's still got half the way to go. The tough half."

Snow said, "They'll get him."

"Sure they will," Brennan said.

"Three-five-seven Magnum," Sam said. "A nice gun."

"Very nice," Brennan said. "Do for elephants." He looked at Sam. "We've got a crew in the railroad yards, checking the incoming trains. Why don't you and Chris hop out there and give them a hand?" The telephone was ringing again. "And keep in touch," Brennan said.

The radio called Sam and Chris back to headquarters within the hour. Now the third-floor hall was crowded—reporters, photographers, uniformed city police, plainclothes and strangers. Brennan's office was crowded.

Sam saw a captain of the state patrol, the chief of city traffic, the vice squad second in command. Brennan's office had become a headquarters, that was obvious.

Sam felt a tightening inside himself as he approached Brennan's desk.

"Bad news, Sam," Brennan said.

"Yes, Chief?"

"Poole's in town somewhere."

A farmer's dog had found a man slugged, stripped to his shorts, tied and gagged and dumped in a cornfield north of Tilden. The dog's barking had brought the farmer. Pure luck the man had been found at all—side road, open country.

"Victim's name is Asa Smith," Brennan said. "Lives in Tilden, works here in town. Got his car out of his garage this morning, drove a block to a stop street. Poole opened the door and got in with him. Made him drive toward Prosser. Slugged him, stripped him, took the car."

"Rough," Sam said.

"It gets rougher," Brennan said. "Smith wouldn't do for Poole's twin, but he'd pass for his brother. Weight, height, hair, eyes—all about the same. Y'see? Poole matches Smith's driver's license and fits his clothes. The name on the driver's license matches the car registration. That's all Poole needed to get past the blockades."

The captain of the state patrol said, "We can't arrest everybody we stop. If they can identify themselves, we have to let them through."

Brennan gave him a level stare. "Nobody blames you, Captain. I'd've let him through myself." He looked at Sam. "Smith gave us the license number of his car. Traffic found it parked on Jefferson Street twenty minutes ago. A good piece of work. Fast. But the bird had flown."

Sam said, "Smith had money in his wallet, I suppose?"

"Twenty-five or thirty bucks."

"All Poole will need," Sam said, "if this is as far as he wants to go."

"This is it." Brennan's eyes were

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

steady. "He could have gone in a half dozen directions, all easier than the one he picked. But he came here, straight here. He wants a shot at your wife, Sam. You've got to believe that."

"What about her?" Sam asked.

"She's safe. I've loaded the neighborhood. And the house. He couldn't get to her with a tank."

"How's she taking it?"

"Not good. Worried stiff about you."

"Me?" Sam said. "You didn't tell her?"

"Not yet," Brennan said. "She thinks the police are in the house in case Poole shows up, looking for you. We're letting it ride like that. Anything else is up to you."

Sam bit his lips. "My job, I guess."

"You know what she can take," Brennan agreed. "The problem now is to grab Poole. Any suggestions?"

Sam looked at the map of the city that hung on the wall. It was a big city. Poole could be anywhere. Downtown, in the residential districts, or in one of the outlying communities. A two-bit bus ride would reach them all.

"He wouldn't be in a hotel," Sam said. "Or a rooming house, or a boarding house, or a transient apartment. Too easy to find."

"We're looking," Brennan said. "A first offender, he hasn't a lot of connections. He couldn't buy a hideout. Not enough money. And he's too hot."

"Right again."

"A friend wouldn't take him in."

"I doubt it, but we're checking."

Sam said, "He couldn't walk the streets or hide in the brush. Somebody'd spot him. He'd know he'd have to get in under a roof somewhere."

"Whose roof?"

"Anybody's," Sam said.

He looked at the map again. There were thousands of homes in the residential areas, more thousands close by. Families in each one. Kids, grownups, old people.

A man with a gun could walk into any home. He could take this one or that one of the family as a hostage. The others would dance to his tune. Everyone would know he had killed a guard. They would know they'd die as the guard had died unless they walked a very careful line. And if one of them was foolishly brave? If Poole became nervous, impatient, frightened?

Sam said, "It's a tough proposition."

"Very tough," Brennan said. "And we haven't got forever. He'll kill again if we don't get him soon. I've put it on the radio and in the papers—everybody check their neighbor. If they see anything unusual or different, they're to call us on the quiet. It's something, but not much."

"Not enough," Sam said.

Brennan looked at him steadily. And Sam was conscious, then, of the weight of every other eye in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

room. They were all looking at him quietly, waiting. Waiting for what? And then Sam knew why he'd been called in, why Brennan had asked him for a suggestion.

"Poole doesn't know, does he?" Sam said. "I mean, that we know he's after Lila?"

"How could he?" There was a gleam in Brennan's eyes. "He didn't hear the tape. He doesn't know his cell mates told the warden."

"He'll scout my place," Sam said. "If he finds the neighborhood loaded with cops, he'll go back under cover and stay as long as he has to. A week, two weeks, three weeks."

Brennan nodded.

"But if it looks normal around there—no cops, me going to work, coming home—he might make his try." He saw the light growing in Brennan's eyes. "He'll know I'm there, at least. He'll know he can settle for me, if he can't find Lila."

"And he'll buy it," Brennan said.

Sam saw Brennan's eyes move to to the other men in the room. Besides the light in his eyes, now there was a faint smile on his heavy face. The smile said, "You see?" Bob Brennan's eyes came back to Sam.

"We talked it over before you came in, Sam," he said. "We had the same idea. It was your pick, of course. I knew you'd make it. And we've got a couple of things to add. Time's short. We want him to move now—this afternoon, tonight. And I think we can persuade him to do it."

"How?"

"A diversion," Brennan said. "We'll get out a bulletin—radio, newspapers, TV—saying we have him cornered in the Kretlow Hills. Identification positive. That's rough country out there, take a couple of days to cover it all. And we'll cover it—planes, roadblocks, bloodhounds, the works. Pictures, more bulletins all the time. Poole will call it a fine piece of luck. He'll grab the chance."

"Sounds good," Sam said.

"Who do you want to run the show at your place?" Brennan asked. "You can't do it. You're the bait."

"Chris suits me."

"Fine. And your wife?"

"I'll move her out," Sam said. "If she's not at our phone-book address, she's on the moon as far as he's concerned. He won't know where to look."

"Take her to my place," Chris said. "I'll call the wife and tell her you're on the way."

"Can do," Sam said.

Leon Poole walked east in the rain on Holly Road. The city was a thirty-minute bus ride behind him. This was suburban country: mailboxes standing beside black pavement, small homes, young orchards shivering in the November wind.

There was little traffic at ten o'clock in the morning. He was certain that none in the passing cars would note or remember him.

His hat was too small. It rode oddly high on his head. He wore a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

blue suit, a transparent slicker, and carried a brown brief case. He was cold and hungry and very tired. Never strong, the past hours, the strain, the miles he'd traveled had left his knees shaking with weakness.

He forced himself to walk firmly, head erect—an insurance salesman making a morning call or a real-estate agent out to inspect property. He read the names stenciled on the mailboxes as he went along.

The house he sought stood well away from the road, a neat, shingled structure, square and small. The shades were drawn and no smoke came from the chimney. A small sedan was parked on the gravel drive.

He went past the car to the back porch. The blinds here were up. He could see a stove, a table, and the white bulk of a refrigerator. He set the brief case beside the door and lifted the skirt of the slicker to put his hand on the gun in his coat pocket.

The door was not locked. Leon Poole opened it slowly and carefully and walked into the quiet room.

He went through the house, moving on tiptoe. A living room, dining room. Gray light seeped through the drawn blinds. An inner hall gave on the bedroom and bath.

Poole opened the bedroom door carefully and slowly. A muscle quivered in his cheek. He found the light switch and flicked it up with nervous haste. He stayed in the doorway, a plump, frightened man, wrapped in a dripping slicker.

Across the room a woman sat up in bed, blinking, surprise in her face. Beside her, a man slept with his cheek pillowed on his hands.

"Please don't scream," Poole said.

"Who are you?" The woman's voice was thin. She stared at him, the covers clutched at her breast. "What do you want?"

"Will you wake your husband?" Poole said.

The man was awake, pushing himself up. He was not frightened. A faint grin, almost derisive, turned the corners of his wide mouth.

"I'll be damned," he said. "Poole. Leon Poole."

"Yes," Poole said. "Get up. Get dressed."

The name of the man in bed was Otto Flanders. He'd been an Army first sergeant, and now, sitting up, naked to the waist, he still had the look of one. Hard and confident. Poole had been a corporal in his company—Signal Corps, Calcutta—and Otto Flanders could think of him as nothing else. He sat on the bed, arms around his knees, and grinned at Corporal Poole.

"Yes, sir," he said, "I will be damned. When I heard you helped yourself to the bank's cash and got thrown in the can, I said to myself, 'It can't be. Not Corporal Poole. Not Fat Boy.' "

Leon Poole took the heavy revolver from his pocket. He pointed it at Otto Flanders' bare chest.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Get up," he said.

Flanders' face hardened. "That's a lot of ordnance."

"I know how to use it," Poole said. "You taught me, remember."

Flanders stared at him. "How come you're loose?"

His wife said, "Otto, maybe you'd better—"

"Relax." Flanders grinned at Poole. "Well?"

"Don't you read a paper or listen to the radio?"

"Not on my day off. I'm sleepin' in, or was." He put brown hands on his knees. "You tryin' to say you broke out?"

"I escaped," Poole said. "Late yesterday. I killed a guard. The police everywhere are looking for me."

"You killed a guard?"

"Yes," Poole said. "Now will you get up?"

"Oh, Otto—" the woman whispered.

Otto Flanders' eyes were steady on Poole's face. "Yeah," he said. "I'll get up. Take it easy." To his wife, he said, "You too. Take it easy. I'll handle this."

Poole said, "Be careful."

"Always careful. Careful Otto, that's me."

He got up without haste, without nervousness or fear—with care. His eyes never left the gray face of Leon Poole. He found shorts and jeans and put them on. He put his fists on his hips—six feet of lean brown man, hard and capable.

"Now what d'we do?"

"We'll go out in the kitchen," Poole said. "Your wife will get up and get me something to eat. I'll kill one of you if the other tries anything. Don't scream, don't try to telephone, don't try to get away."

Flanders said, "Do what he says, hon."

Poole backed through the door into the living room. Flanders followed him. He turned his back on the gun and went into the kitchen. He made preparations for coffee—kettle on the stove, coffee in the drip pot. He didn't look at Poole, but he was very much aware of him.

Poole had shed the slicker and hat. He was standing where he could look into the small kitchen, a soft-looking man, gray with fatigue, who held a heavy revolver in his pudgy hand. Flanders' wife came in, a rough bathrobe thrown over her nightdress.

"Easy does it," Otto Flanders said.

His wife, Grace Flanders, was a big woman in her middle thirties. Her face was the color of sand now, and her eyes held fear that was almost anguish. She clattered a frying pan on the range.

"You're scaring the hell outa my wife," Flanders said.

Poole said, "That can't be helped."

"What'd you come here for?"

"No one knows I know you," Poole said. "In Calcutta you talked a lot about this place. It's near the city, you have no close neighbors."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The plump shoulders moved in a tired shrug. "I didn't have a lot of choice," he said, "or a lot of time."

"So you picked me." Flanders came out of the kitchen to stand with his bare back against the door frame. "You're nuts," he said. "Y'can't get away with this. All the cops in the country are lookin' for you—they'll find you."

"I know that," Poole said. "I expect it. But I'll have time to kill the woman I want to kill before they find me."

"Gimme that again?"

"The man who sent me to prison killed a woman I loved more than anything in the world. More than life, much more." Poole's voice was faint, almost listless, but still matter-of-fact. "It was murder. I think he should suffer the way I suffered. Then they can do what they want with me."

Flanders stared at him. A line of white came to rim his tight lips.

Slowly he said, "I guess you mean that."

"I most certainly do."

Flanders waited a moment. "You'll never make it."

"I think I will," Poole said.

"Unh-uh," Flanders said. "And I'll tell you why. You're tired. I can see yuh shakin'. You got to rest sometime, you got to sleep, don't you? How're you goin' to do it? Tie me up? Tie my wife up? You can do that—maybe. But I've handled some real tough characters in my time. You'll make a mistake. When you do, I'll take you. And I won't leave enough of you to send home for cat food."

"You're strong," Poole said. "I know that."

"Want a piece of advice?" Flanders held out a big hand, palm up. "Give me that gun now and I'll treat you gentle."

"No," Poole said.

Flanders' voice took a rough edge. "Think I can't take you, gun or no gun? Think you aren't goin' to make a mistake, sooner or later? Turn your head a minute, take your eyes offa me one second—that's all I need. I'm not kiddin'!"

"I know you're not," Poole said. His round face seemed to sag even more; his large brown eyes held something close to tears. "You're quick," he said. "I'm tired and not very sharp. It wouldn't be hard. You could throw something—"

"Okay," Flanders said. "How about it?"

Poole shot Flanders through the chest. The gun was big—one shot was all that was needed. The sound of it crashed enormously in the room. Poole saw Flanders punched backward against the door frame, saw him turn slowly and fall.

Beyond the door, in the kitchen, Grace Flanders stood motionless before the range, then closed her eyes and crumpled to the floor. She hadn't screamed. Poole went to a chair and sat down. He stared at Otto Flanders and his wife.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I'm not sorry," he said. "I had to do it."

Sam Wagner drove through the rain-swept streets with care. He watched the traffic behind him, the oncoming traffic and the traffic beside him, with particular attention to cars driven by men alone. Now and then he glanced at Lila.

She was sitting beside him, hands clasped in her lap, watching the beating windshield wipers. She was grimly silent, her lips set and her chin firm. Her silence was a protest. A uniformed officer had let Sam through his own front door. He'd found two plainclothes men in the living room with Lila. There'd been squad cars in the street as they'd driven away. Her silence was a protest against all this, and with Lila silence was far more grim than any words.

"No questions?" he asked.

"One," she said. "Where are we going?"

"Gillespie's," Sam said. "You're going to stay with Mary until we get our hands on Poole."

He hadn't told Lila it was her life that Poole wanted. And now, thinking about it again, he decided that this was still not the time. She was keyed, he knew, to the breaking point. Nothing could be gained by frightening her more. After the thing was done, after Poole was dead or behind bars, would be time enough.

She said, "This is not the way to Gillespie's."

"A roundabout way," he said.

"Why roundabout?"

Sam set his narrow jaw. "That's obvious, isn't it? The guy's loose somewhere in town. He might have picked up another car. He might have been waiting and spotted me when I drove away. Not likely, but possible. We're not taking any chances, Lila."

She turned on the seat to watch the traffic behind them. After Sam had made two more turns, she said, "Sam, there is a car following us."

"Black sedan?"

"Yes."

"There's a maroon sedan ahead of us, too," Sam said. "Cops in both of them. They're clearing us, Lila."

Lila turned to stare through the windshield again. Silent again, grim again. Sam knew there was an explosion on the way. She couldn't hold that much anger, that much resentment long without letting it go. When the explosion came Sam knew it would be big. He wondered if their marriage, or any marriage, could be strong enough to stand against it.

Mary Gillespie met them at the door. She kissed Lila and took her coat. Her dark eyes questioned Sam. "Does she know?" Sam shook his head. Mary bit her lips. She didn't know whether it was right or not.

Sam said, "This is a lot of trouble."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Idiot!" Mary said. "What good am I, if I can't help?"

Sam was looking at Lila. She'd gone into the living room, she was standing with her back to him. He looked at Mary Gillespie and shook his head again. Mary knew how Lila felt about police and police work. And she understood clearly what this business of Poole meant.

Sam said, "Lila, I'll keep in touch."

She turned. "Sam, why am I here?"

"I told you," Sam said. "A precaution. We're not taking any chances. And you're safe here. All Poole's got is our phone-book address. If you're not there, you're on the moon as far as he's concerned. He can't find you."

"Why should he want to?"

Sam lied a little. "He's a psycho. I explained that. You never know what a psycho might do. If he can't find me, he might settle for you."

"And what are you going to do?"

"Going back to the house, Lila," Sam said. "We've got a trap rigged for him. An army of cops out of sight. If things look normal around there—"

"You're the bait for the trap?"

"In a sense, I suppose. I—"

"You are, Sam." Her face was white now. "Don't try to avoid the truth. You're using yourself as bait. That's very noble and brave. But it seems to me you have other responsibilities."

"What would you have me do?"

"If he can't find me here, he can't find you here. Or anywhere we care to go. You and I can drive down to the beach, can't we? And stay at a motel until this is over?"

"No, we can't."

"Why not?"

"I'll tell you why."

And he told her. Not gently. There was anger in him too. His voice was slow, implacable, and cold.

Every cop hunting Poole, he said, was laying his life on the line. He was not going to run out on them. More than that, he said, his life and the lives of the other police were not the only ones at stake.

He told her where they thought Poole was hiding—in someone's home, holding them hostage—and that Poole would certainly kill again, unless they caught him soon.

"I'm a member of the human race," he said. "It seems to me I owe my fellow members something. And I'm not taking any big risk. I'll be covered. He won't get through."

"He won't get through!" Lila said. "He came from Winston here, didn't he? An escaped convict, on foot, without a friend—he got through half the police in the state, didn't he? You said he couldn't, but he did! He's smarter than you think. He knows all your tricks. He'll be watching for them. And you try to tell me there's no risk." Her voice turned hoarse. "Go on! Tell me again! Lie to me!"

"I won't lie to you," Sam said. "There is risk."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

She covered her face with her hands. She stood that way for a long moment, and when she took her hands away, Sam knew the final time had come. Her face was taut and white.

"I can't go on," she said. "I'd go stark raving mad if I tried to. You think your duty lies with your work. I think it lies with me—us. I'm not going to argue, I'm not going to fight. I love you, Sam. Perhaps too much. But I can't go on wondering if the next footstep I hear will be a man come to tell me you've been killed. It will be easier to forget you than to live a nightmare." Her hands were locked behind her. "Either we drive to the beach now, or we're through."

Quietly Sam asked, "Is that final, Lila?"

Mary said, "Sam! Lila! For the love of heaven—"

Lila said, "That's final, Sam."

"We've had it, then," Sam said. "Good luck, girl."

A radio spoke quietly in the living room of the house on Holly Road. In a statement made at five P.M., the radio said, Lieutenant Snow, of the state patrol, had reaffirmed that escaped convict-murderer Leon Poole was within the police cordon surrounding the Kretlow Hills.

Bad weather and difficult terrain had slowed the search. It would continue, however, throughout the night. Every available man and means was being used. Capture was expected at any hour.

Leon Poole said, "True or false?"

No one answered him, for he was alone in the room. He got out of his chair and turned off the radio. He had slept most of the day, and the rest had done much for him. He looked well and felt well.

He stood for a moment, lips pursed. The body of Otto Flanders lay where it had fallen, blanket-covered. Leon Poole didn't see it. He listened to the rain slatting against the windows. A night like this would be a good night, he thought. Everyone hurrying through the storm, heads down, collars up.

He thought about the radio announcement. It could be a trick, but it could be the truth too. The police might make a mistake like that. If they had made a mistake, it would be the best thing in the world for him. "I'm tempted," he said.

But still he had to think it through carefully. He thought the odds against him were very high. But hadn't they always been? Would they ever be better than they were now? No. Every hour, every day increased the odds against him.

"Well, then," he said, "now is the time."

He went past the body. The bedroom door was open. He found the light switch. Grace Flanders was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lying on the bed beneath a comforter. There was adhesive tape across her mouth. More tape bound her wrists and ankles.

Shock had made her face vacantly ugly; her eyes were dull and puffed with weeping. Leon Poole did not look at her. He went around the bed to open the closet door.

He needed a dress, something plain and dark. Fit was no problem; Grace Flanders was a big woman, her hands and feet were large. He needed a coat with a full collar—fur, if the woman owned one. He needed shoes, a hat and an umbrella.

He pawed through the dresses on the closet rack. The blue wool, he decided, would do nicely.

Sam Wagner was at home. The blinds were up, the living room was well lighted. Sam sat beneath a reading lamp, a magazine in his lap. His eyes went to the clock. Eight fifteen. Outside, the storm still whipped the trees and threw rain in bursts against the windows. It had been a long afternoon and a long evening.

The compact two-way short-wave radio on the floor beside Sam's chair spoke softly. A man on foot had entered the area. He was watched, checked from one post to another until he entered a house a block away, a family man home from work.

A sedan, driven by a woman, turned onto Montgomery from a main east-west artery, moving slowly. It was tracked past Sam's house almost to Van Brocklin, another main artery, where it turned again, out of the area.

A pair of high-school kids ran past Sam's house, heads down in the rain. Another car, a woman driver, another car, a man driver—checked in, checked out.

It had been like that all afternoon and evening. Every approach was covered. Any man who even came close to the description of Leon Poole was followed by a dozen guns.

"A woman," the radio said. "Fat, middle-aged, carrying an umbrella on Thirty-fifth."

"Okay," Chris Gillespie said. "Don't scare her."

He was in the house directly across the street from Wagner's. He'd commandeered an upstairs bedroom. The searchlight was there, ready for use. Two riflemen stood behind darkened windows.

Gillespie was the center of the radio net; every movement in the neighborhood was plotted and charted in the room where he sat. Brennan, at headquarters, was the center of a net that covered the city.

"Black coupe on Montgomery," the radio said crisply. "Looks like a high-school kid driving."

The black coupe was tracked and cleared.

Sam wondered if it would comfort the woman on Thirty-fifth to know that never in her life would

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

she be safer on a dark street than she was right now. She really had protection.

The radio again, Gillespie's voice, "Sam, come in."

Sam opened his microphone. "Sam speaking, Chris."

"We've lost Lila," Chris said.

"What d'you mean, lost her?"

"She's not at my house. She walked out."

"Why?" Sam said. "When?"

"That wife of mine," Chris said. "She's good people, all heart, but she can't keep her nose out of things. She's Mrs. Fixit, y'know. She's got to help. She couldn't stand Lila bein' mad at you. I'm goin' to paddle her for this, I promise you that. Sam, she told Lila the score, and I'm afraid she was rough about it. She told Lila you were sitting in for her, playing pigeon in Lila's place."

"How long ago did Lila leave?"

"Twenty or thirty minutes ago," Chris said. "Hard to say exactly. Mary thought she was napping. She looked in the bedroom to check and Lila was gone. Sorry, Sam." The radio was silent for a moment, then, 'Any idea where she'd go? Her sister's, maybe? Some other relative?"

Sam thought of Lila alone in Gillespie's bedroom. Knowing now that she was Poole's target, remembering the words she'd hurled at him. Sam found his hands were suddenly shaking. His voice was oddly thick.

"She's coming home, Chris," he said.

"Home?" Chris said. "What makes you think so?"

"She's my wife, Chris. She'd want to be here."

"Oh." Again Chris was silent for a moment. "I think you're right," he said. "Lila would, with the chips down."

Sam said, "Keep an eye out for her."

"Check," Chris said. "Will do."

Lila Wagner was tired. She was sitting behind the driver, on the first seat of the Van Brocklin Street bus, her hands clenched in her lap. She was cold, wet, and she couldn't remember another time when her head had ached so blindingly.

She rubbed mist from the window and peered out into the rain-lashed night. Oak Street. Harrison next. Then the long climb up to Montgomery and she was home. Almost.

She didn't want to think of the walk from the bus stop to the house —four blocks, and most of it in the thick dark beneath huge and ancient trees. She thought, instead, of Mary Gillespie, a white-faced, big-eyed Mary. She heard again Mary's hurt and shaking voice.

"Hate me, if you will," she'd said, "but I can't wait any longer. You're being a coward, Lila. A thoughtless, selfish coward." Blazing anger hadn't stopped her. "Sam puts his work before you, does he? Risks his life for strangers? Doesn't care what happens to you? Well, here's the truth. He'll trade his life for yours

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

any time. He's offering to do it now. It isn't Sam that Poole wants to kill. It's you!"

There'd been more. And when Mary had left her, closing the bedroom door, there'd been a half hour in the darkness. A long look at Lila Wagner. Yes, she was a coward—that was her only clear decision. But somehow out of it had come the knowledge that she had to go home. Sam was taking her place, and that was wrong. His life was more important than her own. She couldn't reason why. She knew it because her heart had told her so.

"Harrison," the bus driver said.

A boulevard stop. The bus halted and a man and woman got aboard. Lila Wagner's heart lurched. The man was short and fat, wrapped in a sodden trench coat. He dropped his fare in the box and turned.

The man was not Poole; he was sixty or sixty-five. He wore a bristling gray mustache, a gray tuft of beard. But Lila, finding she'd held her breath, knew she'd been very much afraid.

"Montgomery next," the driver said.

The bus crawled up the hill, buffeted by wind and rain. Lila watched the landmarks pass: the haloed neon of David Drug, the Thrifty-Mart, the theater and Barber shop. Three blocks to go.

Now waves of fear began to flow through her. The man with the beard had started them. Her mind filled with images of Poole—dark, liquid eyes, sodden face. He had stabbed a man in the throat, he was waiting somewhere for her.

She looked out the window. Two blocks to go.

One block.

Now she found she didn't want to ring the bell. She couldn't face that dark and dripping tunnel beneath the trees. Not yet.

Her hand went up and pulled the cord.

The bus swung over to the curb, the door sighed open. *I can't get off, Sam, I can't, I can't.* She was on her feet, going past the driver and down the steps. In a moment, the bus was gone.

The service station and garage here were dark. The corner arc light bounced on the wind and long shadows raced across the pavement clawing at her legs.

She looked down Montgomery Street toward home. Hedges and dripping trees and the wet shining of light on a parked car. Four blocks—four blocks was such an enormous distance. All that darkness, all those shadows, all those trees. A man, a dozen men, could be hidden along here.

She couldn't do it. No matter what the cost, she hadn't the strength or the courage. And yet she did do it. She crossed the paved service-station lot and went into the dark beneath the trees.

Don't think, she told herself. *Just walk—fast.*

Water spilled down the street

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

roar into the storm drains. At the intersection she had to wade in water ankle-deep. Then she was under the trees that roofed the walk again.

"Only three blocks to go," she whispered. "Just three."

She saw the lumpy figure then. A woman standing against a hedge. A fat, middle-aged woman holding an umbrella. Not moving, not doing anything, just standing there.

Lila glanced at her. There was darkness and shadow, but light enough to see a wet and pallid face above a coat collar of thin, wet fur. The woman wore a hat, shapeless, mashed, and somehow—wrong!

A silent shriek of warning rang in Lila's mind. No woman would ever wear a hat like that. She looked again and saw eyes that were dark, liquid, and staring. She knew those eyes.

Leon Poole, she told herself.

She heard his step on the walk behind her. She didn't look back. She couldn't look back. She walked steadily down the hill, shocked and numbed with terror.

His footfalls exactly matched her own. He didn't gain, he didn't lag. The flesh of her back crawled with the waiting—waiting for the impact of a bullet or a sudden overpowering rush.

Neither came. A half block and still nothing. Why? He had seen her face. He was following her, he must know who she was.

Then a cold clarity came to her mind. He wasn't sure. He hadn't seen her since the courtroom more than three years ago. She had changed, she'd lost weight, her face was thinner, her clothes were different.

He wasn't sure enough to cut her down. He was waiting for her to reach home. He knew the address. The moment she turned up the walk—

But she didn't have to turn; she realized that suddenly. She could go past the house. The moment she did, she would be any woman in the world but Lila Wagner.

Poole would let her go. He would turn to the house, to the lighted windows. The police were waiting for a man. Poole, in a woman's clothes, would have time enough to reach a window, to find Sam, to lift his gun and shoot.

"Oh, God," Lila whispered.

Again she measured her strength, her resolve, the cost. She'd found strength enough to leave Mary Gillespie, to ride the bus, to leave the the bus. She'd had enough to come this far.

But this was the end. She couldn't turn up the walk toward the house. It was beyond her, hopelessly beyond her.

"Oh, Sam," she whispered. "I can't do it!"

The short-wave radio beside Sam Wagner's chair had been jammed with voices the past few minutes. The watch in the dark service station at Van Brocklin and Mont-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gomery had seen a woman get off the bus. The woman might be Lila Wagner. The man in the service station did not know her; he could not be sure.

"Tall?" Sam said. "Gray coat, gray fur hat?"

"Check," the radio said.

"A bus, for the luvva Mike!" This was Chris Gillespie's voice. "Why not a cab right to her door?"

"She's a frugal woman," Sam said. "She hates cabs. A cab wouldn't enter her mind."

"Let's pick her up," Chris said.

"This's Five," a new voice said. "There're two women now. The other's the one we had on Thirty-fifth. The fat job with the umbrella. She's behind Mrs. Wagner."

"Watch her!" Sam said. And then a new thought flashed in his mind. "Chris! Is the fat one a woman?"

Chris said, "Come in, anybody. Is that fat one a woman? Make damn sure. Poole's fat, and he could wear a fat woman's clothes. Sufferin' Joe, come in, somebody! Come in!"

Several voices spoke at once. Then a new voice came in clearly. "Had a look at her under the light at Thirty-fourth. I wouldn't bet she's a woman. Under the umbrella it's hard to tell. But the way she walks, it's not right."

Chris said, "Let's move in!"

"Stand fast!" Sam's voice was harsh. "If that's Poole, why's he waiting? He's not sure it's Lila. He's waiting to see if she comes here. If we move in, he'd know we've go him boxed and he'll start shooting Lila first."

"Maybe we can put a car between them at Thirty-third."

"Too late," a voice said. "They've crossed."

Another voice said, "I can stop him with a rifle. He won't do any shooting after a slug hits him."

"And if the fat one is a woman?" Sam asked.

Chris said, "You call it, Sam We'll do it."

Leon Poole held the umbrella in his left hand. His right hand was in the pocket of Mrs. Flanders' coat holding tight to the butt of the heavy revolver. He was a dozen paces behind the tall slender woman walking carefully, trying to remember a woman's stride was short and clipped. If he broke stride, the sound would frighten her. He wanted her to go on, unworried, to turn or not turn when she reached the Wagner residence.

Granted things could break for him, as well as against him. But too much good luck was suspicious. The wild goose chase in the Kretlow Hills was all a man could really hope for. Then, after all the struggle and fight and risk, to have Lila Wagner pass within arm's reach, alone, on a dark and deserted street —that was beyond all bounds of reason.

Her description fitted, yes. He'd often thought the face he'd seen in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the courtroom could never change so much that he wouldn't recognize it anywhere, any time, at a glance. And he'd been certain in the brief moment. She was thinner, but she was the woman.

Then reason had asserted itself. It was more luck than he could hope for. And if he killed the wrong woman here, so close to Wagner's, the police would know what he intended and guard her well, and his last hope of seeing justice done would vanish.

"I can wait," he said, "a little longer."

Lila Wagner would go into the Wagner house. Another woman would continue on. As simple as that. When she turned, if she turned, he would have time—perhaps as she climbed the front steps, perhaps as she opened the door. If she didn't turn, then he could try the windows.

The house had been well lighted when he'd driven by a little while ago. There was someone home. Surely he would be able to find Lila Wagner through one of the windows.

If not the woman, then Sam Wagner. He would have to take what he could get now; he was sure he would never get this close again.

He carefully matched his stride with that of the woman ahead, step for step. He felt like a man walking a very high wire, danger on every hand, the goal almost within his reach. And he was confident. He would reach the goal. The Wagner walk was only a few steps away.

The woman ahead faltered. A catch in her stride, a half stumble. Poole's hand closed tightly on the gun. His every sense became alert.

Two more strides and the woman faltered again. Her head was bent, one hand seemed to be at her face. The Wagner walk was only a step or two ahead of her. She straightened to walk firmly, determinedly. She was going past the Wagner house, Poole knew that suddenly and certainly. He cursed softly. This was not the woman.

A stride beyond the walk, Lila turned. She'd met a barrier she couldn't pass. A barrier within herself. She turned suddenly, glad that she had to turn, glad that she could turn and run, bent low and screaming, toward the front porch.

She heard the roar of a gun and fell.

Her sudden movement had surprised Poole. Sure she was going on, he'd relaxed for a moment. Then he'd drawn the gun and fired hurriedly at the bent, fast-moving figure. He missed.

He knew he'd missed.

He lifted the gun for another shot. It was a shot he never fired.

A wild man vaulted the hedge between Poole and the Wagner walk. A man in shirt sleeves who planted himself on wide-spread legs, facing Poole, gun in hand. Brilliant light burst on them.

Poole tried to shift his gun for a shot at the man in front of him. Again, too late. Sam Wagner fired

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

first. At ten feet, in bright light, he did not miss. Nor did the others.

Rifles boomed across the street, revolvers barked, and a submachine gun tore the night.

Leon Poole was dead before his body struck the walk.

The night passed. A long night for Lila. A confused night. A night in which her husband proved himself a hard-fisted, swearing, unreasonable tyrant. She remembered him lunging up the front lawn, scooping her up in his arms, and slamming into the house with her. She remembered him bellowing, "A doctor! Get a doctor fast!"

He'd thrown her on the bed so hard she bounced; he'd petted her until she was black and blue. Had she cried? Of course, she'd cried. She'd been half out of her mind, crying about a dozen things.

"Sam, for the love of Pete!" Chris Gillespie's voice. "Will you stop pounding on her? She'll be all right. Do something useful—bar the door. There's a howling mob out there, and more coming all the time."

Police, reporters, photographers, the curious—hundreds, by the sound of them. She'd heard Sam's voice roaring above the clamor, "No! No pictures, no stories! Tomorrow, or next week, or never! But not now!"

The doctor, then, "No harm done, Mr. Wagner. Your child will be along on schedule. Your wife's a strong woman."

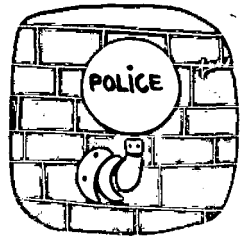
And Sam: "You're telling me?" A wonderful thing to sleep on, a wonderful thing to wake up to. And now, in the quiet of her bedroom in the morning, something wonderfully warm to hold in her heart.

She'd been afraid, terribly afraid. But still she'd been the wife Sam needed and wanted and had to have. And she was sure, now, that she could always be that kind of wife.

Worth it? A hundred times worth it. He was out in the kitchen, a whistling happy man. In a moment he came into the bedroom with a breakfast tray. When he looked at her, his pale blue eyes were shining.

"What d'you say, sweet? Hungry?"

"Like a horse," she said. "Both of us."



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(Continued from other side)

Get 9 Great Mysteries

(worth $31.50 in publishers' editions) FOR ONLY $1.00

The Case of the ICE-COLD HANDS
The Case of the MISCHIEVOUS DOLL
The Case of the Amorous Aunt
The Case of the DARING DIVORCEE
The Case of the PHANTOM FORTUNE
The Case of the Horrified Heirs
Is There a Coffin in the House?
The Sharp Cut of Fear

TAKE a deep breath – get ready for ACTION – then plunge into these great, suspense-filled stories of mystery, intrigue, amazing detection! You get *six* of Erle Stanley Gardner's best Perry Mason masterpieces – in six full-size, hard-bound books. Then you get a *seventh* Perry Mason (his latest!) – PLUS 2 MORE new mystery thrillers – in a big Triple Volume. These nine mysteries would cost $31.50 in the publishers' original editions – but YOU get them ALL *for $1.00* as your introduction to the many advantages of membership in The Detective Book Club.

The Best NEW Mysteries – for LESS than 97¢ each!

Out of the 300 of more new detective books that come out every year, the Club selects the very "cream of the crop" – by outstanding authors like Erle Stanley Gardner, Agatha Christie, A. A. Fair, Mignon G. Eberhart, and John Creasey. All THESE and many other famous authors have had their books selected by the Club. Many are members themselves!

Club selections are ALL newly published books. As a member you get THREE of them complete in one handsomely-bound Triple Volume (an $8.85 to $11.50 value in publishers' regular retail editions) for only $2.89.

Take ONLY the books you want

You do NOT have to take a volume every month. You receive a free copy of the Club's "Preview" which will fully describe all coming selections and you may reject any volume before or after receiving it. NO money in advance; NO membership fees. You may cancel membership any time you please.

SEND NO MONEY

Mail Postcard for ALL NINE Mysteries

Simply mail postcard promptly and we will send you at once the SEVEN Perry Mason thrillers – PLUS the two other exciting mystery hits – all described on other side. However, this exceptional offer may never be repeated. So don't risk disappointment. Mail postcard AT ONCE to:

THE DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB
Roslyn, L.I., New York 11576

MAIL THIS POSTCARD NOW FOR YOUR NINE MYSTERIES • NO POSTAGE NEEDED

SEND NO MONEY – JUST MAIL THIS POSTCARD 91-273

THE DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB FO
Roslyn, L.I., New York 11576

Please enroll me as a member and send me at once the SIX full-length hard-bound editions of Perry Mason thrillers, PLUS the brand-new 3-in-1-volume Club selection containing the latest Perry Mason and 2 other great mysteries. I enclose NO MONEY IN ADVANCE; within a week after receiving my books, I will either return them all and owe nothing, or keep ALL SEVEN volumes, containing NINE first-rate mystery stories, for the special new-member introductory price of ONLY $1.00 (plus a few cents mailing charge).

As a member, I am to receive advance descriptions of all future selections, but am not obligated to buy any. For each future Triple Volume I decide to keep, I will send you only $2.89 (plus a few cents mailing charges). I may reject any volume before or after I receive it, and I may cancel my membership at any time. *(Books shipped in U.S.A. only.)*

Name.....
(Please Print Plainly)

Address.....

City..... State..... ZIP CODE ZONE NO.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ERLE STANLEY GARDNER Fans and ALL Detective Story Lov

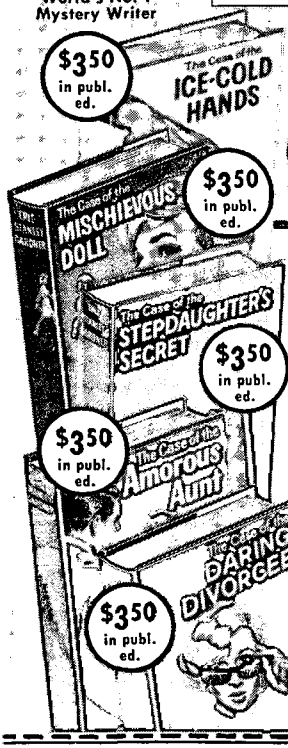
World's No. 1 Mystery Writer

This Astonishing Offer Includes 7 PERRY MASON "Cases"!

$31.50 (in publishers' editions) WORTH OF EXCITING NEW MYSTER

ALL YOURS FOR ONLY $[ ] as a new mer

9 GREAT MYSTERIES IN ALL


$3.50 in publ. ed.
The Case of the ICE-COLD HANDS
The Case of the MISCHIEVOUS DOLL
$3.50 in publ. ed.
The Case of the STEPDAUGHTER'S SECRET
$3.50 in publ. ed.
$3.50 in publ. ed.
The Case of the AMOROUS Aunt
The Case of the DARING DIVORCEE
The Case of the PHANTOM FORTUNE
$3.50 in publ. ed.
$3.50 in publ. ed.

6 Murder-Mystery-Suspense Thrillers!

❶ **The Case of the PHANTOM FORTUNE**
Perry is forced to defend *himself* against a charge of *framing an attempted MURDER!*

❷ **The Case of the DARING DIVORCEE**
A suspected murder weapon *disappears* — and the D.A. threatens *Perry with San Quentin!*

❸ **The Case of the AMOROUS AUNT**
Lorraine Elmore *swears* she's innocent. But SHE has a motive; and ONLY SHE was a witness!

❹ **The Case of the STEPDAUGHTER'S SECRET**
Perry tells a wealthy client how to handle a blackmailer. And *one* way is to "KILL HIM!"

❺ **The Case of the MISCHIEVOUS DOLL**
When Perry openly deceives a jury, the judge demands *why* — and Perry offers "NO EXPLANATION!"

❻ **The Case of the ICE-COLD HANDS**
A $25,000.00 horse race payoff leads Perry to a motel room — and DEATH!

6 Perry Maso

IN THESE 6 FULL-SIZE, FULL-LENGTH, HARD-BOUND BOOKS

PLUS

The LATEST PERRY MASO

AND 2 MORE

Top-Flight Detective S ries in this big 500-pa

"3-in-1" Volum

$1(Val publ edi

❼ The Case o HORRIFIED By Erle Stanley Perry's client met Mrs. Trent But — SOM WANTS TO DER THEM B

IS THERE A TR ❽ IN THE HO By Patricia Government Selena Mead i *the girl her wo murderers* TH

❾ THE SHAPE O By Hugh P Murray Ca learns a *secret* French terrori a "grave" err *his* part!

(See other

Postage Will be Paid by Addressee

No Postage Stamp Necessary If Mailed in the United States

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL
First Class Permit No. 47 — Roslyn, N. Y.

THE DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB
Roslyn, L. I.
New York 11576

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED